The Pigman

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF PAUL ZINDEL

Paul Zindel was born in Staten Island, New York in 1936. His father was a police officer, and his mother was a nurse. Zindel studied chemistry at Wagner College and went on to work as a chemical writer after graduation. After quitting his job as a chemical writer, he worked as a high school science teacher for 10 years. He released his first play, *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* in 1964, and it was met with much success. The play ran on Broadway in 1971 and would earn Zindel the 1971 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Zindel married psychotherapist and writer Bonnie Hildebrand in 1973, and the couple had two children together: Lizabeth Zindel, a novelist; and David Zindel, a publisher. Following the success of his first play, Zindel went on to write 53 books, most of them for children or young adult readers. Most take place in his hometown of Staten Island and are partially autobiographical, featuring misunderstood teenagers who come from dysfunctional, neglectful, or abusive homes (Zindel's father abandoned the family when Zindel was very young, and his mother struggled to support the family on her own). Zindel's books for young readers combine serious subjects like loneliness, abuse, and loss with eccentric humor. In addition to *The Pigman*, which is among Zindel's most popular and widely taught books in the U.S., he has also written *My Darling, My Hamburger* (1969), *Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball!* (1976), and *The Pigman's Legacy* (1981), a sequel to *The Pigman*. Zindel died in New York City of lung cancer in 2003 at the age of 66.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Pigman was published in 1968. The book's protagonists, John and Lorraine, come of age in the 1960s, a period that was defined by intense social and political unrest and a rapidly shifting cultural landscape, largely shaped by the ongoing Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and the feminist movement. In 1960 in the U.S., nearly half of the population was under 18 years of age, giving way to an increasingly influential youth culture. Many young people of this generation (among them *The Pigman*'s John and Lorraine) felt alienated by the conservative values that society (and their parents) forced on them, and they rebelled against the status quo by participating in the counterculture movement, which gained traction alongside the ongoing civil rights movement and other ongoing social and political shifts. The counterculture movement was defined by rebellion, with young people rejecting the conservative views of human sexuality, gender roles, obedience to authority, and materialism that earlier generations largely embraced. The rebelliousness and alienation that John and Lorraine exhibit in *The Pigman* embodies the spirit of 1960s youth culture in the U.S.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

At the time of their initial publication, Zindel's books for young adults were unusual in their portrayal of serious, often dark subject matter for young adult audiences. *My Darling, My Hamburger* (1969) deals with subjects of teenage sexuality, pregnancy, and abortion. Like *The Pigman*, *Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball!* (1976) also takes place in Staten Island and follows the story of two teenage social outcasts dealing with dysfunctional families. *Confessions of a Teenage Baboon* (1977) is a semiautobiographical coming-of-age novel that tells the story of Chris, a 15-year-old boy whose father abandoned his family and whose mother works as a nurse, just like Zindel's own parents. The novel follows Chris as he learns to let go of his absent father and deals with issues of insecurity, illness, and loss. Other books for young readers that deal with serious subject matter include *Speak* (1999) by Laurie Halse Anderson, which deals with issues of rape, social ostracization, bullying, and overcoming trauma. *It's Kind of a Funny Story* (2010) by Ned Vizzini is about a 15-year-old boy who is hospitalized following a suicide attempt. The book grapples with serious issues like eating disorders, depression, and self-mutilation. The book is semiautobiographical, based on Vizzini's own hospitalization for depression.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Pigman
- **When Published:** 1968
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Young Adult Novel
- **Setting:** Staten Island, New York
- **Climax:** The shock of Bobo's death causes Mr. Pignati to suffer a heart attack, and he dies at the zoo.
- **Antagonist:** Norton Kelly
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Controversy. *The Pigman* is included in "The Most Frequently Banned Books in the 1990s," a list of books that were challenged in schools and public libraries in the U.S. between 1990 and 1992.

The Original Pigman. Paul Zindel based the character of Mr. Pignati on Nonno Frankie, an old Sicilian man who lived in Zindel's Staten Island neighborhood when Zindel was growing up. Zindel had a rather unstable and unhappy homelife growing up, and Nonno Frankie brightened Zindel's childhood, bringing Zindel Sicilian treats and telling him jokes.

PLOT SUMMARY

The spring of their sophomore year of high school, Lorraine Jensen and John Conlan sign an oath vowing to tell the truth—and only the truth—about their experiences with Mr. Angelo Pignati, "The Pigman." What follows is a first-person confession, told from Lorraine and John's alternating perspectives, of the previous months they spent getting to know Mr. Pignati, who has since died.

John is a handsome, outgoing jokester who regularly orchestrates pranks to get a rise out of people at school. Lorraine, meanwhile, is shy and reserved. She was lonely when she first moved into John's neighborhood last year, but now they're each other's best friend. Still, Lorraine grouses about John's apparent need to wear unconventional clothing, swear, drink alcohol, and smoke cigarettes, though she hypothesizes that he probably does these things to rebel—Lorraine reads a lot of psychological articles and is constantly analyzing people in her life. And John comes from a dysfunctional household: his dad (whom John calls "Bore") is a mean recovering alcoholic who introduced John to drinking at a young age, and his mother (whom John calls "The Old Lady") is too timid and anxious to defend John against his father and support him.

Lorraine's situation isn't much better: Lorraine's father cheated on Lorraine's mother when she was pregnant with Lorraine and then abandoned the family and died not long after. Lorraine's mother struggles to raise Lorraine on her own on a nurse's salary. Her husband's infidelity led her to develop a hatred for men, boys, and sex, and she takes out a lot of her stress and anger on Lorraine, constantly criticizing her appearance, berating her, and even beating her. As a result, Lorraine has poor self-esteem and rarely acts on her instincts. For instance, in retrospect, Lorraine believes that she received numerous "bad omens" foreshadowing Mr. Pignati's death but chose to ignore them.

Mr. Pignati first comes into John and Lorraine's life by accident. The teens are making prank phone calls with Dennis Jobin and Norton Kelly, two "really disturbed" classmates of theirs. Lorraine randomly selects Mr. Pignati's number out of a phonebook, pretending to be calling from a local charity when Mr. Pignati picks up. Lorraine instantly detects the loneliness in Mr. Pignati's voice—it's clear he's desperate for someone to talk to. Things escalate, and John arranges for the two of them to go to Mr. Pignati's house, pretending to be charity workers, to pick up Mr. Pignati's 10 dollar "donation" to their fund.

John and Lorraine arrive at Mr. Pignati's house and find Mr. Pignati to be a cheerful, talkative elderly man. He invites them inside, pours them glasses of homemade wine, and talks to them about his love of zoos and his wife Conchetta, who he claims is out of town visiting relatives. When he talks about Conchetta, he momentarily looks like he's about to cry. Mr. Pignati also shows them his prized collection of **pig figurines**. He asks the teens if they'd like to go to the zoo tomorrow, but they're hesitant.

After talking with Mr. Pignati awhile, Mr. Pignati gives John and Lorraine his "donation," and the teens excuse themselves. John uses Mr. Pignati's check to buy beer and cigarettes. Lorraine feels guilty about taking advantage of Mr. Pignati, but it doesn't bother John. Lorraine returns home and has an argument with her mom. Afterward, needing something to cheer her up, she calls up John and tells him she'd like to go to the zoo with Mr. Pignati tomorrow after all.

The next day, the teens cut class and meet Mr. Pignati at the zoo. Mr. Pignati buys them peanuts and then takes them to the monkey house to introduce them to his friend Bobo, a mean, ugly baboon. Mr. Pignati, unperturbed by Bobo's unfriendliness, smiles and throws peanuts into Bobo's cage.

Time passes. John and Lorraine spend their days hanging out in a local **cemetery** and at Mr. Pignati's house. They eventually grow close to the old man and come to think of him as one of their favorite people, though they don't yet come clean with him that they're high school students, not charity workers. One day, while at Mr. Pignati's house, John finds some papers from a local funeral home and discovers that Conchetta isn't away visiting relatives—in fact, she recently died. John shares this information with Lorraine, but they decide not to tell Mr. Pignati what they know just yet.

One day, Mr. Pignati, who enjoys eclectic, foreign delicacies and other fancy foods, takes the teens to the department store Beekman's in Manhattan for a shopping spree. They also buy roller skates for the three of them.

About a month after John and Lorraine start hanging out with Mr. Pignati, Norton Kelly invites John to the cemetery for a beer. Norton asks John why he spends so much time with Mr. Pignati—does he have anything in his house worth stealing? When John refuses to answer, Norton insinuates that he'll rob Mr. Pignati. In response, John calls Norton "Marshmallow Kid," a nickname kids gave Norton after he was caught shoplifting marshmallows from the local supermarket. Then John storms off, inwardly vowing to hurt Norton if he does anything to Mr. Pignati.

Sometime later, John and Lorraine are at Mr. Pignati's house, and Mr. Pignati seems especially blue. The teens decide it's time to come clean about their real identities, and they reveal that they're actually high school students. In response, Mr. Pignati admits that Conchetta isn't actually visiting relatives—she's

dead, and Mr. Pignati misses her terribly. The teens comfort Mr. Pignati. To lighten the mood, John puts on his roller skates and zooms around the house. Lorraine and Mr. Pignati join him. But in the process, Mr. Pignati overexerts himself and has a heart attack. John calls an ambulance.

The next day, John and Lorraine cut class to visit Mr. Pignati at the hospital. He's doing much better but will have to remain at the hospital awhile longer—in the meantime, he tells the teens they can continue to hang out at his house. Lorraine and John return to Mr. Pignati's house that evening, and Lorraine makes dinner. They dress up in Mr. Pignati's and Conchetta's clothing and goof around. John thinks Lorraine looks genuinely beautiful in one of Conchetta's old dresses.; he chases Lorraine into Mr. Pignati's bedroom and kisses her, which catches them both off guard.

Later, Lorraine calls up a nurse at the hospital who tells her that the earliest Mr. Pignati would be released is Saturday. That Friday, Lorraine and John return to Mr. Pignati's house. Things have been weird between them since their kiss earlier that week. Despite Lorraine's protests, John invites a bunch of their classmates over for a party that night. Around 40 kids show up; there's live music, dancing, and lots of drinking. Norton arrives later, upset that he wasn't invited. Sometime later, John hears sounds coming from the room where Mr. Pignati keeps his pig collection. He looks inside and finds Norton destroying all the pigs. Overcome with rage, John punches Norton in the face; a fight ensues. Just then, Mr. Pignati arrives home.

The police escort John and Lorraine home, telling them they're lucky that Mr. Pignati isn't going to press charges. When they reach Lorraine's house and explain things to Lorraine's mother, she hits Lorraine, scolds her for lying, and then breaks down crying. Lorraine hugs her mother, guilty about all she has put her through.

John calls Lorraine the next morning and says that his parents hardly reacted when the police brought him home. Bore told John he was going to make him see a psychiatrist, but John doubts this will actually happen. John and Lorraine meet up later that day and call Mr. Pignati from a pay phone to apologize for breaking his trust. He sounds sad but agrees to meet them at the zoo.

When Mr. Pignati arrives at the zoo, he looks tired and sad but seems happy to see Lorraine and John. They buy some peanuts and make their way to the monkey house to see Bobo. But when they arrive, Bobo's cage is empty, and a zookeeper informs them that Bobo has died. Hearing this, Mr. Pignati has a heart attack and dies. Lorraine runs out of the monkey house while John stays behind to be with Mr. Pignati's body and deal with first responders. Afterward, John finds Lorraine outside, sitting on a bench, and sits down beside her. Inwardly, John considers how all their consequences have actions. He and Lorraine can't blame anyone for their problems—only they are responsible for what happens to them and how their actions affect others.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

John Conlan – High school sophomore John Conlan is one of the novel's two narrators. He's boisterous, handsome, and a compulsive liar. Though John is initially rather selfish and without compassion, he becomes more self-examined and develops empathy as he spends more time with Mr. Pignati. Despite his outer confidence, John has a lot of fears and insecurities—he's constantly thinking about death, for example—but keeps these insecurities to himself. John's withholding nature stems from the fact that his parents don't give him the emotional support he needs to grow. John's unaddressed issues cause him to act out, be disrespectful, and engage in self-destructive behaviors like drinking and smoking. Before meeting Mr. Pignati, he and Lorraine are each other's only friend, but John nonetheless spends much of the book picking on and undermining Lorraine, mocking her for her fears and insecurities and not being sensitive to her emotional needs. At John's urging, John and Lorraine throw a raucous, drunken party at Mr. Pignati's house, resulting in the destruction of Mr. Pignati's beloved pig collection. The shock of this betrayal (and the death of Bobo) ultimately causes Mr. Pignati to suffer a fatal heart attack, and so John and Lorraine feel somewhat responsible for Mr. Pignati's death. In the end, Mr. Pignati's death teaches John and Lorraine that all their actions have consequences and that they alone are responsible for what becomes of their lives.

Lorraine Jensen – High school sophomore Lorraine Jensen is one of the novel's two narrators. She is introspective, shy, and highly compassionate—the opposite of her best friend John. She exhibits her compassion and insight through her obsession with psychology, turning to articles about psychological disorders to understand the troubled behaviors of the people in her life. For instance, she attributes John's lying, drinking, and smoking to his dysfunctional household, and she attributes Lorraine's mother's abusive behavior to her difficult life and lingering heartache over her late husband's (Lorraine's father) infidelity. Though Lorraine can empathize with others' poor behavior, though, their behavior still affects her; Lorraine's mother is constantly criticizing Lorraine's behavior and appearance, and as a result, Lorraine has poor self-esteem and is highly passive. Even as Lorraine and John develop a meaningful, genuine relationship with Mr. Pignati, Lorraine remains plagued by "bad omens"; in retrospect, she believes these omens foreshadowed Mr. Pignati's death and laments her decision to ignore them. In the end, Lorraine's passivity prevents her from halting John's ill-advised plan to throw a rowdy party at Mr. Pignati's house. The shock of this betrayal indirectly causes Mr. Pignati to have a fatal heart attack, and

John and Lorraine feel indirectly responsible for his death. Mr. Pignati's death teaches Lorraine that not only do her actions have consequences, but also that her *inaction* can have horrible consequences, too.

Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman") – Angelo Pignati, whom John and Lorraine nickname "the Pigman," is an elderly widower whom the teens unintentionally befriend after they randomly call his number as part of a prank phone call game and subsequently go to his house to scam him out of ten dollars. But upon meeting the man, it's immediately apparent that he's friendly, harmless, lonely, and desperate for companionship. Though Mr. Pignati at first claims that his wife Conchetta is away visiting relatives, John and Lorraine later find out that she has in fact died. The teens start cutting class to spend time at Mr. Pignati's house. They also go to the zoo, where Mr. Pignati introduces them to his beloved baboon friend, Bobo. Later, Mr. Pignati has a heart attack and must recover at the hospital, but he urges John and Lorraine to continue hanging out at his house until he recovers. Despite Lorraine's protests, John organizes a drunken party at the house; things get out of hand, and Mr. Pignati's beloved collection of **pig figurines** is destroyed. This betrayal severely damages Mr. Pignati's relationship with John and Lorraine. Before they have the chance to make amends, Mr. Pignati learns that Bobo has died, and the shock of this—and the lingering hurt of John and Lorraine's betrayal—leads him to suffer a fatal heart attack.

Lorraine's Mom – Lorraine's mom is a home nurse. She has a hard life—her work doesn't pay well and she struggles to raise a child as a single mother. But she takes her stress out on Lorraine, relentlessly criticizing her daughter's behavior and appearance and even beating Lorraine on some occasions. (Note that while the book seems to portray Lorraine's mother's behavior as merely strict, modern audiences would likely—and justifiably—consider it abuse.) Lorraine's father cheated on Lorraine's mother when she was pregnant with Lorraine, leading to their separation. Because of this, Lorraine's mother maintains a hatred of men, boys, and sexuality, and she tries to instill this hatred in Lorraine. Though Lorraine's mother's behavior and ideas hurt Lorraine, Lorraine maintains a degree of empathy toward her mother that only grows as the story progresses—she understands that her mother acts the way she does because she's unhappy and has a hard life, not because of anything that Lorraine has done wrong. At the end of the novel, Lorraine and her mother seem to come to an understanding, though it's left ambiguous whether they'll be able to heal old wounds or whether their home life will continue to be unhealthy and unstable.

Mr. Conlan ("Bore") – Mr. Conlan, whom John has nicknamed "Bore," is John's father. He's a recovering alcoholic who quit drinking after getting diagnosed with sclerosis of the liver (a result of his alcoholism). But before he quit drinking, he jokingly encouraged young John to drink, which ultimately led John to develop a drinking habit. John's unruliness frequently causes Bore to lose his temper, and so much of John's mother's attention goes toward ensuring that Bore remains calm, often at John's expense. Bore sees John as a misbehaving underachiever and frequently compares John to John's wealthy, successful older brother, Kenneth. Bore doesn't understand—and doesn't seem interesting in understanding—John's dreams and inner struggles. As a result, John doesn't receive the support and encouragement he needs to thrive, and he responds to this either by suffering in silence or acting out.

Mrs. Conlan ("The Old Lady") – Mrs. Conlan, whom John calls "The Old Lady," is John's mother. She's a timid, anxious woman who is primarily concerned with keeping her volatile husband, Bore, calm—often at John's expense. John's mother (and his father, for that matter) repeatedly fails to give him the support and encouragement he needs to thrive. When John acts out, his mother is more concerned with ensuring that John's bad behavior doesn't upset Bore than getting to the bottom of why John is acting out. As a result, John's bad behavior (and the inner unhappiness that has caused it) goes unaddressed.

Bobo – Bobo is a mean, vicious baboon who resides at the zoo. Despite Bobo's rather hostile demeanor, Mr. Pignati considers Bobo his friend and frequently visits him and feeds him peanuts. He perhaps does this because it reminds him of his late wife, Conchetta—Mr. Pignati and Conchetta both loved animals, and before she died, they'd go to the zoo together. At the end of the novel, Mr. Pignati learns that Bobo has died, and the shock of this revelation causes him to suffer a fatal heart attack.

Conchetta Pignati – Conchetta was Mr. Pignati's wife. She died sometime before the events of the story take place, and Mr. Pignati is still grieving her—so much so that he can hardly confront her death directly. When John and Lorraine first meet Mr. Pignati, for instance, he claims that Conchetta is away visiting relatives. Unlike John's and Lorraine's parents, Mr. Pignati and Conchetta really seemed to love each other and make each other happy. Mr. Pignati associates Conchetta with his beloved **pig** collection, so when Norton Kelly destroys the pigs during a party John organizes that gets out of hand, it crushes Mr. Pignati.

Norton Kelly – Norton Kelly is one of John and Lorraine's classmates who attends the raucous party they throw at Mr. Pignati's house while Mr. Pignati is recovering at the hospital. He's a stereotypical "tough guy" and bully—but John thinks this is a response to his peers ridiculing him for playing with dolls when he was a little boy. In Norton's first year of high school, he was caught stealing marshmallows at the grocery store, earning him the humiliating nickname of "The Marshmallow Kid." Ever since then, he's been a social outcast. Norton arrives at the party at Mr. Pignati's house uninvited and proceeds to destroy Mr. Pignati's beloved **pig** collection, after which he and

John get into a physical fight.

Dennis Jobin – Dennis Jobin is one of John and Lorraine's classmates who attends the raucous party they throw at Mr. Pignati's house while Mr. Pignati is recovering at the hospital. He's Norton Kelly's friend, and the two of them are known as bullying troublemakers (though Norton is decidedly more dangerous and unhinged than Dennis). Like many of *The Pigman*'s teenage characters, Dennis grows up in a rather dysfunctional household—his father is a mean alcoholic.

Miss Reillen – Miss. Reillen is the school librarian. She's apparently somewhat overweight but wears tight dresses anyway. While John mocks her for this (which today's readers may find especially cruel and uncalled for), Lorraine has more empathy and tries to imagine reasons why Miss Reillen might dress the way she does—for instance, perhaps Miss Reillen gained weight but can't afford to buy new clothing.

Deanna Deas – Deanna Deas is one of John and Lorraine's classmates who attends the raucous party they throw at Mr. Pignati's house while Mr. Pignati is recovering at the hospital. She also works in the Dean's office at school and, because she has a crush on John, ensures that John and Lorraine's cut and absentee cards don't get sent home, allowing them to cut class without consequence.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Lorraine's Dad – Lorraine's dad died several years before the story takes place. He cheated on Lorraine's mother when she was pregnant with Lorraine, causing Lorraine's parents to separate. As a result of Lorraine's father's infidelity, Lorraine's mother has a lingering hatred for men and boys, and a negative attitude toward sexuality.

Janice Dickery – Janice Dickery is one of John and Lorraine's classmates who attends the raucous party they throw at Mr. Pignati's house while Mr. Pignati is recovering at the hospital. She apparently had to drop out of school her junior year because of something involving Jack Brahn.

Jack Brahn – Jack Brahn is one of John and Lorraine's classmates who attends the raucous party they throw at Mr. Pignati's house while Mr. Pignati is recovering at the hospital. He apparently has something to do with Janice Dickery dropping out of high school.

Helen Kazinski – Helen Kazinksi is one of John and Lorraine's classmates who attends the raucous party they throw at Mr. Pignati's house while Mr. Pignati is recovering at the hospital. When Helen and Lorraine try on Conchetta's old dresses during the party, Helen unintentionally rips one of them.

Jen Appling – Jen Appling is one of John and Lorraine's classmates who attends the raucous party they throw at Mr. Pignati's house while Mr. Pignati is recovering at the hospital.

Melissa Dumas – Melissa Dumas is one of John and Lorraine's classmates who attends the raucous party they throw at Mr. Pignati's house while Mr. Pignati is recovering at the hospital.

Aunt Ahra – Aunt Ahra is John's deceased, elderly aunt. She lived with the family before her death, and John often blames her for his own antics.

Kenneth Conlan – Kenneth Conlan is John's wealthy and successful older brother who works on Wall Street. Bore often compares underachieving, troublemaking John to Kenneth.

Tony – Tony owns a corner store, Tony's Market, and is known to sell beer to anyone, even kids below the drinking age. John often takes advantage of Tony's lenience to feed his drinking habit.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

DEATH AND GRIEF

The Pigman is told from the perspective of high school sophomores Lorraine Jensen and John Conlan. The book takes the form of a confession in which John and Lorraine look back on their experience getting to know an old man named Mr. Pignati and examine how a series of selfish, unthinking decisions they made contributed to his recent death. From the start, then, the book establishes death as one of its core ideas, and Mr. Pignati's death is just the tip of the iceberg. Indeed, the teens seem rather obsessed with death—a local **cemetery** is their favorite place to hang out, and Lorraine is haunted by what she calls "bad omens," strange things she witnessed that she believes, in retrospect, foreshadowed Mr. Pignati's eventual demise. John, meanwhile, engages in harmful behaviors like smoking cigarettes and alcohol abuse.

Lorraine suggests that John engages in harmful behaviors because he wants to die. Eventually, John thinks she might be right, and he even considers that being dead might be preferable to being alive, since "[living] people think you're a disturbing influence just because you still think about God and Death and the Universe and Love." John's speculation offers insight into why he and Lorraine are so consumed with thoughts of death: because nobody they know, least of all the adults in their lives, is willing to talk about death with them. For instance, Lorraine's father died when she was very young, yet Lorraine's mother never talks about him to Lorraine (they separated before Lorraine was born due to Lorraine's father's infidelity, and Lorraine's mother still resents him). Furthermore, death anxiety doesn't diminish as one grows up. Mr. Pignati's

wife, Conchetta, died sometime before the events of the novel take place, and when Mr. Pignati first meets Lorraine and John, he claims that Conchetta is away on vacation, seemingly to avoid thinking about her death and confronting his lingering grief. Thus, *The Pigman* suggests that anxiety about death is just as prevalent as death itself. Furthermore, the novel suggests that, not only does ignoring death do nothing to evade death itself, but that not having an outlet to talk about death only exacerbates a person's anxieties about the subject.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Though high school sophomores John and Lorraine might feel that the adults in their life underestimate and talk down to them due to their age, the reality is that they have a lot of growing up to do—in particular, learning to take responsibility for how their actions affect themselves and other people. In fact, *The Pigman* frames a strong sense of personal responsibility as the defining mark of maturity. At the beginning of the story, John and Lorraine are immature and careless. They have no regard for how their actions affect others, and they blame everyone but themselves for their troubles. For instance, John repeatedly insults any authority figure who tries to tell him off—even if John is in the wrong. John is also a compulsive liar (Lorraine rather euphemistically explains that John "twist[s] things subliminally")—he blames all kinds of pranks he pulls on the ghost of his Aunt Ahra, and he once told his parents that he hears voices from space inside his head. The circumstances under which the teens meet Mr. Pignati also highlight their immaturity—Mr. Pignati picks up one of their prank phone calls, and John asks him to "donate" to a made-up charity fund.

Lorraine is decidedly more mature than John and has a more developed sense of personal responsibility. However, she, too, demonstrates a lack of personal responsibility by going along with whatever ill-advised schemes John concocts, like lying to Mr. Pignati about the made-up charity fund or throwing a raucous party at Mr. Pignati's house while he's at the hospital recovering from a heart attack. And in the end, people close to her suffer the consequences of her passivity: Mr. Pignati overexerts himself dealing with all the stress the teens have put him through with their carelessness and dies of a second heart attack; and when Lorraine's mother finally learns that Lorraine has been lying to her for months about hanging out with Mr. Pignati, she feels hurt and betrayed. Though of course John and Lorraine aren't directly responsible for Mr. Pignati's second, fatal heart attack, they feel they're at least partly to blame, and it's the guilt and remorse they feel in response to his death that teaches them that all their actions have consequences. The novel thus suggests that learning how one's actions affect others is a vital—and unavoidable—part of growing up.

FAMILY

Though Lorraine Jensen and John Conlan are quite different in most regards, they do have one major thing in common: they both come from dysfunctional families that don't provide them the love, comfort, and support they need to flourish. John's father (Bore) is recovering from alcoholism and constantly criticizes John, often comparing him to John's successful older brother, Kenneth. John's mother, meanwhile (the Old Lady), is a nervous, timid woman who is obsessed with ensuring that John doesn't agitate his emotionally volatile father—and in the process, she often fails to address John's needs. Lorraine, meanwhile, is raised by her single mother who works long hours as a home nurse to support Lorraine. Lorraine's mother constantly criticizes Lorraine's appearance and has convinced her that she's overweight and unattractive—neither of which are true. She's always warning Lorraine about the evils of men and boys—and threatening to punish Lorraine if she catches her "in a car, necking like a slut." And if Lorraine does something her mother deems bad enough to warrant punishment, she beats her.

Growing up in unsupportive and sometimes unsafe environments affects John and Lorraine deeply, though they respond to their parents' bad parenting in different ways; while Lorraine internalizes a lot of her pain and develops a low self-esteem, John engages in reckless behavior like drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes and acts out in school and at home. While the book hints that Lorraine and her mother might be capable of salvaging their relationship in the future, the book's ending offers no definitive sense of closure for John or Lorraine, and it's possible that they'll continue to endure abuse, neglect, and a lack of support from their families. At the same time, both characters undergo significant personal growth over the course of the novel, despite coming from dysfunctional families. While *The Pigman* rather optimistically suggests that children from dysfunctional homes can persevere and grow despite their families' failure to give them the love and support they need, the book also demonstrates the serious, lasting effects that parents' failures can have on their children.

LONELINESS

John and Lorraine are typical teenagers: they think nobody understands them, they detest the way adults talk down to them, they feel alienated from their peers, and they're often consumed with intense feelings of uncertainty, sadness, and loneliness. In fact, until Mr. Pignati enters their lives, they are each other's only real friend. But the novel suggests that loneliness isn't unique to adolescence; to the contrary, it portrays loneliness as a fundamental part of the human experience, affecting people of all ages and walks of life. John and Lorraine don't plan on becoming friends with Mr. Pignati—at first, they only visit him to follow up on a prank

phone call they happened to place to his number, chosen at random out of a phone book. But despite this, they continue visiting him and forge a meaningful relationship with the elderly, grieving widower, who is desperate for companionship in the aftermath of his wife Conchetta's death—until John and Lorraine enter his life, his sole companion is Bobo, a rather unfriendly baboon he regularly visits and feeds peanuts to at the zoo. Though they make an unlikely trio, in time, Mr. Pignati, John, and Lorraine form a close bond that helps all three overcome the loneliness and sadness that used to dominate their lives, and they start to be happier and more hopeful about the future.

Of course, this happiness is ultimately short-lived: John and Lorraine throw a raucous party at Mr. Pignati's house that gets out of hand and results in the destruction of Mr. Pignati's cherished collection of **pig** figurines. The incident devastates Mr. Pignati and irreparably damages his relationship with John and Lorraine. And when the teens try to make amends with Mr. Pignati, who clearly misses their company despite the hurt their actions have caused him, Mr. Pignati's beloved baboon Bobo dies suddenly, and the shock of yet another devastating loss leads him to suffer a fatal heart attack. In effect, then, he dies of despair and loneliness. Mr. Pignati's tragic fate demonstrates how deeply loneliness can affect a person's life. Still, while loneliness affects most everyone, forming and maintaining close relationships with others—even imperfect ones—can help alleviate some of the pain that loneliness causes.

COMPASSION

In the first chapter that Lorraine narrates, she observes that what most sets her apart from her best friend, John, is that she "ha[s] compassion." Indeed, at the beginning of *The Pigman*, John is virtually devoid of compassion. For instance, he mocks Miss Reillen, the school librarian, for being overweight (at least in John's opinion) and wearing tight skirts. Lorraine, meanwhile, makes up for the compassion that John lacks. Though she admits that Miss Reillen's skirts are perhaps a bit too tight, she acknowledges that Miss Reillen has a personal life that Lorraine and John have no way of knowing about and, as such, there might be some reason that she dresses the way she does—perhaps she's putting all her resources toward caring for her sick mother and can't afford clothes that fit her better. While Lorraine's suggestions are purely speculative, they underscore one of the book's central themes: people can—and often are—battling hardships that go unnoticed by outsiders.

Lorraine's mother is often physically and emotionally abusive toward Lorraine. Over the course of the book, however, Lorraine gains a better understanding of how her mother's personal struggles have contributed to her abusive behavior (though it must be stated that nothing justifies or excuses child abuse or abuse of any kind). Specifically, Lorraine comes to see how a lot of her mother's cruel behavior and the criticism she directs at Lorraine are side effects of the stress and exhaustion of raising a child on her own on a meager nurse's salary; indeed, Lorraine, on numerous occasions, notes how hard her mother works and how she's sometimes caught her crying alone in the kitchen. Thus, while her mother's behavior causes Lorraine undue hurt and suffering, Lorraine's mother is herself suffering and so deserves support or, at the very least, compassion. Similarly, though John initially wants to hang out with Mr. Pignati as a way to get free food and other goodies, his attitude shifts as he and Lorraine get to know Mr. Pignati better. And when John learns how deeply Mr. Pignati's wife Conchetta's death has affected him, he realizes how important it is not to make assumptions about people. John and Lorraine's friendship with Mr. Pignati thus reaffirms the importance of treating everyone with compassion and empathy, even people one thinks might not deserve or appreciate it, because one never knows what inner struggles people are dealing with.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

CEMETERY

The local cemetery where John likes to hang out and drink beers symbolizes the presence of death in John's thoughts and in life in general. It also symbolizes society's unwillingness to talk openly about death—and the negative consequences of that unwillingness, particularly on young people like John and Lorraine. Lorraine recalls how, early in her and John's friendship, John invited her to have a beer with him at his favorite place to drink: the Moravian Cemetery. Though Lorraine thinks a cemetery is a strange place to drink, she reasons that it makes sense for John, given his dysfunctional home life. Thus, Lorraine implicitly suggests that John's interest in the cemetery (and by extension death itself) is a symptom of John's psychological distress and unhappiness. A person with a happy life and loving family, Lorraine seems to imply, wouldn't be so consumed by thoughts of death, and they certainly wouldn't choose to hang out in a cemetery. Early on, then, the book suggests that, to most people, thinking about death and acknowledging death publicly is abnormal and unhealthy.

Later, in a section John narrates, John sheds light on what attracts him to the cemetery. He explains that being in the cemetery makes him think about the largeness of the universe, all the corpses buried beneath him, and about the inevitability of his own death. He later wonders if death might be preferable to life, since living people (Lorraine included) think he's strange for thinking about big things like death all the time. The

cemetery thus becomes something of an elephant in the room: it's a super obvious visual reminder of death and people's discomfort with talking about it. But, as the novel makes clear, *not* talking about death doesn't make death anxiety go away. To the contrary, it only worsens anxiety. Lorraine is haunted by "bad omens" foreshadowing Mr. Pignati's death, for instance, and John's unspoken thoughts about death continue to plague him, too.

PIGS

Mr. Pignati's collection of pig figurines symbolizes Mr. Pignati's trust in John and Lorraine. The pig collection also tracks the evolution—and eventual dissolution—of the teens' friendship with Mr. Pignati. Mr. Pignati first shows the teens his pig collection on their initial visit to his house. Though John and Lorraine don't yet consider the elderly widower their friend—at this point, they're still going by phony names and pretending they're charity workers as part of a prank—this initial visit is the catalyst that initiates the development of their friendship with Mr. Pignati. Mr. Pignati's pig collection is really important to him because it belonged to his late wife, Conchetta, who collected the clay, porcelain, and glass pigs from all around the world. Mr. Pignati's decision to show the teens something so important to him shows that he trusts them and wants to invite them into his life. Lorraine, in particular, recognizes the significance of Mr. Pignati's gesture; indeed, she never messes with the room where Mr. Pignati keeps his pigs, considering it "almost religious" and believing it contains Mr. Pignati's "spirit."

The teens' friendship with Mr. Pignati grows until they consider him among their favorite people. But all that changes when John invites a bunch of his and Lorraine's classmates over for a party at Mr. Pignati's house while Mr. Pignati is at the hospital. The party itself is a massive betrayal of Mr. Pignati's trust, and when notorious troublemaker Norton Kelly arrives uninvited and systematically destroys all the pigs, it takes things to a whole new level. When Mr. Pignati returns home early and finds his house in disarray and his pig collection destroyed, he's totally crushed—both by the destruction of his pigs and by John and Lorraine's betrayal. Though the teens try to apologize to Mr. Pignati—and though Mr. Pignati seems willing, albeit cautiously, to forgive them—he dies of a second heart attack before any of that can happen, leaving John and Lorraine's relationship with him just as irreversibly broken as the pig collection.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the HarperCollins edition of *The Pigman* published in 2018.

The Oath Quotes

❝ The truth and nothing but the truth, until this memorial epic is finished, So Help Us God!

Related Characters: John Conlan, Lorraine Jensen (speaker), Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman")

Related Themes:

Page Number: x

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from the opening section of *The Pigman*, "The Oath," in which narrators John and Lorraine promise to tell "The truth and nothing but the truth" in their "memorial epic," or the personal narrative in which they tell the story of how they got to know Mr. Pignati, all the way up to Mr. Pignati's death of a heart attack. First off, the passage builds intrigue. The reader doesn't yet know anything about the story that John and Lorraine are going to tell, and their dramatic vow to come clean with all the story's details draws the reader in, causing them to wonder what's so important that John and Lorraine feel the need to document it so carefully and thoroughly.

In addition, that John and Lorraine emphasize telling "the truth" suggests that they value honesty and frankness. But as the reader will soon see, this hasn't always been the case—John used to fib about all kinds of things. And before their experience with Mr. Pignati, both teens tended to be a little dishonest with themselves. For instance, John in particular hard a time taking responsibility for his actions, instead blaming his parents or any kind of authority figure when he got in trouble or things didn't go his way. So, when John and Lorraine vow to tell the truth at the beginning of their "memorial epic," it shows that over the course of their friendship with Mr. Pignati, something made them grow up and learn the importance of telling the truth and taking control of one's own life.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ I should never have let John write the first chapter because he always has to twist things subliminally.

Related Characters: Lorraine Jensen (speaker), John Conlan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 7

Explanation and Analysis

This quote takes place during the first chapter that Lorraine narrates. In these opening chapters, John and Lorraine, the narrators of the book (which takes the form of a manifesto the two teens write to document their friendship with Mr. Pignati from start to tragic finish) introduce themselves, giving readers insight into their personalities, family lives, and relationship with each other. Here, Lorraine informs readers of one of John's signature personality traits: "he always has to twist things subliminally." Lorraine says this in response to how John ended the previous chapter—by saying he had to wrap things up and hand the story over to Lorraine or else she'd have a heart attack, which in Lorraine's opinion was a gross exaggeration.

It's important that Lorraine tells readers this because it's immediately apparent that John does "twist things subliminally," or else outright lie, quite often. In time, it becomes clear that he does these things to capture people's attention, as he's been raised by parents who don't give him the support or attention he needs to grow and gain confidence. Thus, Lorraine's disclaimer here introduces two of the novel's central ideas: the major role a person's family plays in shaping their character and development, and the need to be generous and compassionate instead of judging others' behavior. Though Lorraine certainly takes issue with John's constant lying from time to time, ultimately she understands that the lying is a defense mechanism and that John deserves her empathy and kindness rather than her judgment and dismissal.

❝ The one big difference between John and me, besides the fact that he's a boy and I'm a girl, is I have compassion. Not that he really doesn't have any compassion, but he'd be the last one on earth to show it. He pretends he doesn't care about anything in the world, and he's always ready with some outrageous remark, but if you ask me, any real hostility he has is directed against himself.

Related Characters: Lorraine Jensen (speaker), John Conlan, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 11

Explanation and Analysis

In the first chapter she narrates, Lorraine introduces herself and gives insight into her personality, John's personality, and the dynamic of her and John's friendship. Here, she establishes what she sees as the biggest difference between her and her best friend: Lorraine has compassion, and John doesn't—at least, he doesn't act on it. As the story unfolds and the teens get to know Mr. Pignati, Lorraine's characteristic compassion and John's contrasting selfishness will take center stage, and it won't be until the end of the story that John matures enough to exercise the compassion that Lorraine suspects he has but is too afraid to show.

In her closing remarks in the passage, Lorraine demonstrates her self-proclaimed compassion by giving John the benefit of the doubt, suggesting that the reason he sometimes acts selfishly or carelessly isn't because he's a fundamentally bad or selfish person—rather, it's because he's unhappy with his life and himself and doesn't know how to work through those complex emotions. And as the story unfolds and readers get to know John and Lorraine better, it becomes clear that Lorraine's observation is fairly spot on.

❝ Then he started that laughing again. Very quietly at first, and boy, did it burn me! And then I decided I was going to let out a little laugh, so I did. Then he laughed a little louder, and I laughed a little louder, and before I knew what was happening I couldn't stand it, so I really started laughing, and he started laughing, and we laughed so much the whole bus thought we were out of our minds.

Related Characters: Lorraine Jensen (speaker), John Conlan, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 16

Explanation and Analysis

Lorraine recalls the early days of her friendship with John. Lorraine had just moved to the neighborhood and didn't know anybody and felt horribly lonely all the time. One day John—who had a reputation for being a bit of an oddball—sat down next to her on the bus. He started laughing out of the blue, seemingly at nothing. Though at first John's bizarre laughter confused and irritated Lorraine, she eventually decided to join in herself, if only to get him to stop. But to her surprise, Lorraine's fake laughter soon transformed into real, uncontrollable laughter—something that Lorraine hadn't experienced much, if at all, since moving to the new neighborhood. As the cliché goes, "laughter is the best medicine," and John and Lorraine's shared laughter indeed demonstrates the power of friendship and broader

human connection to alleviate the pain of loneliness.

In addition, this scene mirrors a scene that happens later in the book, where John, Lorraine, and Mr. Pignati all make monkey sounds together at the zoo. In both cases, the characters connect through a shared, silly experience, and this connection helps them to forget their loneliness and their sorrows, if only for a little bit.

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ Now Lorraine can blame all the other things on me, but she was the one who picked out the Pigman's phone number. If you ask me, I think he would have died anyway. Maybe we speeded things up a little, but you really can't say we murdered him.

Not murdered him.

Related Characters: John Conlan (speaker), Lorraine Jensen, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 22

Explanation and Analysis

This passage demonstrates John's continued inability to take responsibility for his actions. He acts as though Lorraine's arbitrarily picking Mr. Pignati's phone number out of a phone book kicked off an inevitable series of events that led to Mr. Pignati's death—and over which John had no control. In reality, though, John repeatedly chose to disregard Lorraine's warnings, instead acting selfishly and thoughtlessly and with no regard for Mr. Pignati's feelings or health. It was John who decided to meet Mr. Pignati in person following their initial prank, showing up at his house and pretending to be charity workers seeking donations in an attempt to scam Mr. Pignati out of some money. And it was also John's decision to throw a party at Mr. Pignati's house without Mr. Pignati's permission—and against Lorraine's warnings—that led to the destruction of Mr. Pignati's beloved pig collection, the splintering of his friendship with John and Lorraine, and ultimately (due to the stress of all this) Mr. Pignati's death.

This passage also builds intrigue. Readers at this point know that John and Lorraine are writing a "manifesto" in honor of Pignati, but they don't know why. Here John reveals that Mr. Pignati is dead—and while John and Lorraine didn't "murder[] him," he implies that they are indirectly involved in his death in one way or another.

Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ John told you about Dennis and Norton, but I don't think he got across how really disturbed those two boys are. Norton has eyes like a mean mouse, and he's the type of kid who thinks everyone's trying to throw rusty beer cans at him. And he's pretty big, even bigger than John, and the two of them hate each other.

Actually, Norton is a social outcast. He's been a social outcast since his freshman year in high school when he got caught stealing a bag of marshmallows from the supermarket. He never recovered from that because they put his name in the newspaper and mentioned that the entire loot was a bag of marshmallows, and ever since then everybody calls him The Marshmallow Kid.

Related Characters: Lorraine Jensen (speaker), John Conlan, Norton Kelly, Dennis Jobin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 23

Explanation and Analysis

Lorraine offers additional background information about Norton Kelly, the stereotypical school bully whom she and John sometimes hang out with. This passage is significant for a few reasons. First, it further demonstrates the function Lorraine's chapters typically fulfill: she offers more objective, informative commentary on subjects that John tends to breeze over or to describe from his subjective, often self-interested point of view. Here, Lorraine lays out for the reader that Norton (and his friend Dennis) is "really disturbed," a detail she insinuates John minimized when he first mentioned Norton in the previous chapter.

In addition to demonstrating John and Lorraine's complementary dynamic as storytellers and as friends, this passage also highlights one of Lorraine's most characteristic traits: she's highly compassionate and often takes the extra step to consider why a person (even an unpleasant person like Norton) acts the way they do instead of judging them outright. Here, Lorraine explains that Norton isn't so much a bully as he is a "social outcast," a designation he adopted after years spent being the subject of his peers' ridicule. Though Lorraine doesn't condone Norton's theft nor his presently "disturbed" personality, she implicitly suggests that Norton doesn't misbehave because he's a fundamentally bad or "disturbed" person—rather, he acts that way due to the teasing and lack of compassion he receives from his peers.

There was something about his voice that made me feel sorry for him, and I began to wish I had never bothered him. He just went on talking and talking, and the receiver started to hurt my ear. By this time Dennis and Norton had gone into the living room and started to watch TV, but right where they could keep an eye on timing the phone call. John stayed next to me, pushing his ear close to the receiver every once in awhile, and I could see the wheels in his head spinning.

Related Characters: Lorraine Jensen (speaker), John Conlan, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman"), Norton Kelly, Dennis Jobin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 27

Explanation and Analysis

Lorraine, John, Dennis, and Norton are playing a game where they place prank phone calls to random numbers and see who can keep the other person on the line the longest. Lorraine picks Mr. Pignati's number, and this passage describes her first impression of him. Immediately, Lorraine can detect intense loneliness and sadness in Mr. Pignati's voice, and she starts to regret bringing him into her and John's inane game. Lorraine's careful observation of Mr. Pignati's emotional state is typical of her character—she has a keen interest in psychology and is always citing psychological studies and ideas to explain the behavior of people she interacts with and empathize with them. This scene also establishes the moral conflict that will plague Lorraine for the remainder of her time knowing Mr. Pignati—from the start, she's cognizant of the potentially negative affect that her and John entering Mr. Pignati's life could have on Mr. Pignati.

John, meanwhile, as this passage suggests, has no such reservations. Instead, "the wheels in his head spin[]" as he brainstorms ways to take advantage of this man who is obviously so desperate for human interaction that he's willing to endure a silly prank call if it means talking to another person. This remains the biggest difference between John and Lorraine. Though both are intelligent and thoughtful teenagers, Lorraine consistently applies her thoughtful nature toward others, using it to understand their psychology and empathize with them. Meanwhile John uses people, taking advantage of their psychology for personal gain—and with no regard for the potential consequences of manipulating others in this way.

Chapter 5 Quotes

I blame an awful lot of things on the ghost of Aunt Ahra because she died in our house when she was eighty-two years old.

Related Characters: John Conlan (speaker), Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman"), Mr. Conlan ("Bore"), Mrs. Conlan ("The Old Lady"), Aunt Ahra

Related Themes:

Page Number: 35

Explanation and Analysis

John's mother has just accused him of tampering with the phone lock (a device that immobilizes the rotary needed to dial numbers on old telephones) that Bore placed on the phone to limit John's phone calls. It's obvious that John did this—he's an only child who lives alone with his parents—yet he instead blames the prank on "the ghost of Aunt Ahra," John's elderly aunt who lived with the Conlans in the last years of her life. John's ridiculous accusation highlights one of his key personality traits: his near total inability to take responsibility for his actions. The phone lock incident is a rather comical and innocuous example of John's lack of personal responsibility, but this unfortunate personality trait will lead to devastating consequences later in the novel when John betrays Mr. Pignati's trust by throwing a party at his house without his permission and irreparably damaging their friendship.

"You're ruining your lungs with that thing" was the first remark out of her mouth besides a cough from a misdirected puff from my cigarette. She sounds just like her mother when she says that.

Related Characters: John Conlan, Lorraine Jensen (speaker), Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman"), Mrs. Conlan ("The Old Lady")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 37

Explanation and Analysis

Lorraine and John meet up to go to Mr. Pignati's house for the first time. As Lorraine approaches John, she scolds him for smoking—something she often does. John's irritation at Lorraine's criticism is obvious in the defensive tone he

assumes in this passage. In this defensive state of mind, John sees himself as a victim and refuses to acknowledge how his smoking affects others, especially people like his mother and Lorraine who care about him. First, he seems to imply that Lorraine's cough is passive-aggressive, meant to chastise him for blowing smoke in his face. It doesn't seem to cross his mind that Lorraine could simply not want or like to have smoke blown in her face—who would? And though John seems to interpret her cough and her criticism as judgmental, in reality—as Lorraine has made clear in the sections she narrates—she only scolds John for smoking because she cares about him and wants him to be healthy. Rather than trying to see things from Lorraine's point of view, John ridicules her, comparing her to his mother. John's defensiveness in this scene is a great example of how self-absorbed he can be—and how this trait inhibits him from considering things from other people's perspectives.

"You never wanted to visit lonely people before, or is it that you only like lonely people who have ten dollars?"

"You think you're the perfect headshrinker with all those psychology books you read, and you really don't know a thing."

Related Characters: John Conlan, Lorraine Jensen (speaker), Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 38

Explanation and Analysis

John and Lorraine are about to visit Mr. Pignati's house for the first time to collect ten dollars from him to follow up on a story John made up about himself and Lorraine being charity workers. Lorraine thinks it's wrong to scam an old man, so John tries to take advantage of her empathy, claiming that he wants to visit Mr. Pignati because he's lonely and might even kill himself if they don't stop by. Lorraine, in response, claims that John has "never wanted to visit lonely people before" and implies (correctly) that John is only interested in getting Mr. Pignati's money.

John responds to the accusation with his characteristic defensiveness and emotional manipulation, claiming that Lorraine "do[es]n't know a thing" despite her constant reading of psychology books. John's response is problematic on two fronts. First, he insults his friend and a deep interest of hers simply because she's said something that upsets him. Second, though John might not want to hear or accept it, Lorraine is right: at least in the beginning, John's motivations for spending time with Mr. Pignati are mostly selfish, motivated by greed and a need to fund his underage drinking and smoking habits. This passage not only illustrates the unhealthy dynamic of John and Lorraine's friendship, but it also shows how John, in his failure to accept personal responsibility and be honest about his flaws, insults and hurts one of the people who cares about him most.

"How long has she been gone?" Lorraine asked, trying to be kind, in that English accent of hers.

"She's been out there about a month now."

For a moment he looked as though he was going to cry, and then suddenly he changed the subject. Lorraine's nervous radar was in full operation, and I could tell it made her sad to look at the old man.

Related Characters: John Conlan, Lorraine Jensen, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman") (speaker), Conchetta Pignati

Related Themes:

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

John and Lorraine meet Mr. Pignati for the first time when they go to his house, pretending to be charity workers collecting donations (Lorraine's alter-ego, for unclear reasons, speaks in an English accent). Mr. Pignati seems eager to have people to talk to, so he happily invites the teens inside for wine and conversation. But his jolly mood shifts when he mentions his wife, Conchetta, in passing. He claims that she's just away visiting relatives in California, but when he says this, "he look[s] as though he [is] going to cry," and it's clear to John and Lorraine that there's something about Conchetta that Mr. Pignati isn't telling them.

This passage also reaffirms Lorraine's caring, compassionate nature. It's immediately apparent to her that Mr. Pignati is experiencing considerable emotional pain, and John notes how she visibly feels for him.

The passage also builds intrigue, compelling readers to wonder what's really going on with Conchetta. Though John and Lorraine haven't yet discovered this, Conchetta is in fact dead, and Mr. Pignati is struggling to work through his grief in a healthy way. Unable to talk about Conchetta or even consciously acknowledge her death, he keeps his feelings bottled up inside, though occasionally they slip out momentarily, like they do in this and future passages. As

John and Lorraine continue to hang out with Mr. Pignati and get to know him better, Mr. Pignati eventually becomes comfortable enough with the teens to share his tragic secret with them, underscoring the book's central idea of the transformative power of friendship and broader human connection.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ The thing that made me stop going to the zoo a few years ago was the way one attendant fed the sea lions. He climbed up on the big diving platform in the middle of the pool and unimaginatively just dropped the fish into the water. I mean, if you're going to feed sea lions, you're not supposed to plop the food into the tank. You can tell by the expressions on their faces that the sea lions are saying things like

"Don't dump the fish in!"

"Pick the fish up one by one and throw them into the air so we can chase after them."

"Throw the fish in different parts of the tank!"

"Let's have fun!"

"Make a game out of it!"

Related Characters: Lorraine Jensen (speaker), John Conlan, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman"), Lorraine's Mom

Related Themes:

Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

Lorraine and John agree to accompany Mr. Pignati to the zoo, one of his favorite places. While there, Lorraine reveals that she hasn't been there in years, not since she witnessed a zoo attendant feeding the sea lions carelessly and indifferently.

The main function of the passage is to highlight Lorraine's compassion. Thus far, Lorraine has demonstrated an ability to have compassion for all kinds of people—even her mother, who repeatedly criticizes Lorraine and treats her cruelly. Now she goes a step further, showing a sincere compassion for caged zoo animals.

It also speaks to Lorraine's sense of compassion and empathy that she goes to the zoo even though she really doesn't like seeing the zookeepers treat the animals with such indifference. Though she dislikes the zoo, she goes anyway—not because she wants to, but because it's one of Mr. Pignati's favorite places, and she knows he could use some cheering up.

❝ Then I heard this "Uggauggaboo," and I'll be darned if it wasn't Mr. Pignati starting in. And before you knew it, all three of us were going Uggauggaboo, and we had Bobo, two chimps, and the gorilla worked up into such a tizzy I thought the roof of the monkey house was going to fall in.

Related Characters: Lorraine Jensen, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman") (speaker), John Conlan, Bobo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 67

Explanation and Analysis

John and Lorraine are with Mr. Pignati at the zoo visiting the monkey house. Mr. Pignati has just shown the teens Bobo, a baboon he considers his "best friend." John starts making monkey sounds at some of the primates, and then, to Lorraine's shock, Mr. Pignati himself joins in. Lorraine follows suit, as do Bobo and the other primates in the monkey house. This passage, albeit rather comedically, demonstrates the power of friendship and human (or in this case interspecies) connection.

Though the teens don't yet know the cause of Mr. Pignati's loneliness—his wife Conchetta's death—it's clear to them that he's suffering and desperate for companionship. And though John and Lorraine have each other, they too experience loneliness and sadness—both teens come from dysfunctional families who don't really try to understand them and who don't give them the support they need to flourish and grow.

But here, in the monkey house, John, Lorraine, Mr. Pignati, and an accompanying chorus of primates screech and shout in unison, symbolically connecting through their animal calls and—if only for a little while—forget their loneliness and their sorrows.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ I don't happen to buy all of Lorraine's stuff about omens. She talks about me distorting, but look at her. I mean, she thinks she can get away with her subliminal twists by calling them omens, but she doesn't fool me.

Related Characters: John Conlan (speaker), Lorraine Jensen, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 69

Explanation and Analysis

John narrates the chapter, which picks up after his and Lorraine's trip to the zoo with Mr. Pignati. In the last chapter, which Lorraine narrated, she described witnessing three bad omens during the trip to the zoo—omens she believes, in retrospect, foreshadowed Mr. Pignati's later death of a heart attack. Here, John responds to Lorraine's claim, arguing that Lorraine's talk of omens is utter nonsense. Not only this, but her belief in omens makes her something of a hypocrite. At the beginning of the story, Lorraine criticized John for his "subliminal twists," a term she uses to describe John's tendency to lie or "distort[]" the truth.

Here, John suggests that Lorraine's omens are nothing more than "subliminal twists" themselves—Lorraine's way of interpreting reality to cohere with her anxieties and inner conflicts. It's clear from the start that Lorraine is uncomfortable about entering Mr. Pignati's life, and these feelings amplify after his death, for which Lorraine feels responsible (Mr. Pignati dies of a heart attack, and Lorraine and John both feel that the stress and hurt they caused him by throwing a party at his house without his permission made him more susceptible to the heart attack). What John is implying when he calls Lorraine's omens "subliminal twists" is that Lorraine is distorting reality to justify—and magnify—her feelings of guilt. In a way, Lorraine's omens represent an unhealthy level of personal responsibility—she's essentially implying that she is responsible for knowing the future and should have predicted Mr. Pignati's eventual demise, both of which are impossible.

❝ Then I got very sad because I knew I wasn't really wondering about the guy underneath me, whoever he was. I was just interested in what was going to happen to me. I think that's probably the real reason I go to the graveyard. I'm not afraid of seeing ghosts. I think I'm really looking for ghosts. I want to see them. I'm looking for anything to prove that when I drop dead there's a chance I'll be doing something a little more exciting than decaying.

Related Characters: John Conlan (speaker), Lorraine Jensen

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 72-73

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, John remembers a time he ran ahead of Lorraine and their friends on a trip to the cemetery where local teens like to hang out, laid down in the grass near a tombstone, and thought about death, something he thinks about often. John lays out his interest in death for readers, portraying it as both a source of hope and a source of great anxiety and sadness—and this ambiguity further highlights how confusing John finds death. On the one hand, the thought of his own mortality frightens and saddens John. But on the other hand, the thought that in dying he might move on to some afterlife and "do[] something a little more exciting than decaying" fascinates John and makes him less afraid of death.

It's important to note that John had all these thoughts when he was alone, not when he was hanging out with his friends. The solitary, unspoken nature of John's contemplations reaffirms the idea that death is something taboo and shouldn't be talked about in public. However, as the depth of John's thoughts here shows, ignoring death publicly hasn't made John's anxiety go away—to the contrary, it seems only to have fueled it.

Chapter 8 Quotes

❝ As I watched her I remembered all the times she said how hard it was to be a nurse—how bad it was for the legs, how painful the varicose veins were that nurses always got from being on their feet so much. I could see her standing under the street light... just standing there until the bus came. It was easy to feel sorry for her, to see how awful her life was—even to understand a little why she picked on me so. It hadn't always been like that though.

Related Characters: Lorraine Jensen (speaker), John Conlan, Lorraine's Mom

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

As Lorraine watches her mother wait outside for the bus, she considers how hard her mother's life is. Lorraine's mother has explicitly related to Lorraine the physical toll that nursing takes on the body, but now Lorraine considers

the equally taxing emotional toll that nursing—and, implicitly, raising a child as a single mother—takes on her mother as well. The compassion that Lorraine shows her mother in this passage is admirable in light of the constant criticism and physical and emotional abuse that Lorraine's mother forces Lorraine to endure. Of course, with that being said, it's ultimately true that no matter "how awful" their life is, it's never okay for a parent to abuse their child. While the book doesn't overtly describe Lorraine's mother's actions as abusive, modern readers may raise their eyebrows at Lorraine's mother's constant criticism of her daughter's looks and weight and her tendency to hit Lorraine when Lorraine has done something that's upset her.

Still, it's generous and commendable of Lorraine to see things from her mother's perspective and try to justify some of the cruelty she sends Lorraine's way, and this further establishes Lorraine as John's opposite. Like Lorraine, John has a fraught relationship with his parents. But instead of taking a step back and trying to see things from their perspective, he acts out and intentionally tries to create conflict.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ I had become a disturbing influence, as they say. If I light up a cigarette, all my mother's really worried about is that I'm going to burn a hole in the rug. If I want a beer, she's worried I'm not going to rinse the glass out.

Related Characters: John Conlan (speaker), Mrs. Conlan ("The Old Lady")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 109

Explanation and Analysis

John considers his troubled relationship with his parents. Here he describes his mother's response to his drinking and smoking to show how little his parents care about him. While one might expect John's mother to be more upset about how her son's habits are affecting his health, what she cares most about is that his cigarettes might damage the carpet and that he might forget to wash his drinking glass.

John also indirectly—and perhaps unwittingly—gives insight into why he acts out and engages in self-destructive behaviors like drinking and smoking: he's trying to get a response from his inattentive parents, but to no avail. Eliciting a response—even a negative response—might make up for his parents' inattentiveness, at least to a limited extent. Thus John's attention-seeking behavior illustrates how not having supportive, involved parents in one's life can lead impressionable, confused young people down harmful, self-destructive paths.

Chapter 10 Quotes

❝ Beware of men is what she's really saying. They have dirty minds, and they're only after one thing. Rapists are roaming the earth.

But now I understand her a little. I think the only man she really hates is my father—even though he's dead.

Related Characters: Lorraine Jensen (speaker), Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman"), Lorraine's Mom, Lorraine's Dad

Related Themes:

Page Number: 112-113

Explanation and Analysis

Lorraine comments on her mother's frequent habit of disparaging men for always have sex on their minds and for constantly warning Lorraine about the dangers of men and boys. Lorraine's initially sarcastic tone suggests that she thinks her mother's advice is overblown and unnecessary. Lorraine hangs out with Mr. Pignati all the time, for instance, and he has never made her feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

In the latter half of this passage, though, Lorraine takes a more serious look at her mother's views on men and considers why she thinks that way. As Lorraine understands it, Lorraine's mother doesn't really hate all men—she just hates Lorraine's father, who cheated on her when she was pregnant with Lorraine, leading to Lorraine's parents' separation. Though Lorraine's mother's past heartbreak and betrayal doesn't justify her generalized hatred of all men, knowing about it helps Lorraine to empathize with her mother instead of judging her outright. At the same time, though, this passage is further evidence of the many ways Lorraine's mother fails to provide Lorraine a healthy and stable environment to grow up in. If Lorraine weren't so compassionate and introspective, she could easily take her mother's advice at face value and adopt her overgeneralized hatred of all men.

Chapter 11 Quotes

❝ By the time we left, I was so glad to see the outside world I thought I had been in prison for seventy-three years. The smell of hospitals always makes me think of death. In fact I think hospitals are exactly what grave-yards are supposed to be like. They ought to bury people in hospitals and let sick people get well in the cemeteries.

Related Characters: John Conlan (speaker), Lorraine Jensen, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman")

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 136

Explanation and Analysis

As John and Lorraine leave the hospital following their visit with Mr. Pignati, who has just had a heart attack, John exhales a sigh of relief. Though John outwardly pretends not to care much about Mr. Pignati's health, his thoughts here suggest otherwise. The reason John was so uncomfortable in the hospital was because it made him "think of death," perhaps Mr. Pignati's death in particular. This is a recurrent pattern for John: he's often too confused or insecure to voice his inner conflicts and emotional struggles aloud and instead feigns indifference or acts out to cope with his unexamined feelings.

This passage also further explores John's fixation with death—and his struggle to make sense of death or communicate his anxieties about it to others. John's idea that dying people ought to be buried in hospitals—where they are hidden away, far less visible than they are in tombstone-laden cemeteries—perhaps symbolizes his longing to ignore his anxieties about death instead of confronting and making peace with them. But as the story continues to unfold, it becomes clear that failing to acknowledge death doesn't make John's death anxieties go away; instead, he only becomes sadder and more confused.

Chapter 12 Quotes

❝ The room was very dark though I could make out the shapes of pigs all around me. But instead of being on a table the pigs were arranged on a long black container, and as I started to realize what it was the fingers propelling my legs tightened and moved me closer. I felt the same horrible force taking control of my arms, and I couldn't stop my hands from moving down to the lid of the box. When I touched it my hands went cold, and I knew I was about to open a coffin. I started to cry and plead and call to God to stop me as the lid began to rise.

Related Characters: Lorraine Jensen (speaker), John Conlan, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman")

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 150

Explanation and Analysis

Lorraine and John are hanging out at Mr. Pignati's house alone while Mr. Pignati recovers at the hospital from his first heart attack, and Lorraine has a nightmare about death. This passage is her description of that dream. Lorraine's dream starts out rather abstractly, but two details let readers know that she's dreaming about Mr. Pignati's death in particular. First, John and Lorraine have just witnessed Mr. Pignati have a heart attack, so Mr. Pignati's fragile health is fresh in Lorraine's mind. Second, the dream takes place in the room where Mr. Pignati keeps all his pigs—a room that, earlier in this chapter, Lorraine described as a manifestation of Mr. Pignati's "spirit."

It's totally reasonable for Lorraine to have such a frightening dream, given all that she's gone through recently—watching Mr. Pignati fall to the floor was likely a very traumatic experience for her. But Lorraine's dream also suggests a broader fear of death—combined with an inability to really talk about this fear with anyone. Like John's, Lorraine's meditations on death take place entirely inside her own mind—and in this case, her unconscious mind. It's as though Lorraine believes that if she just ignores death and doesn't bring it up out loud, she can will it away. But in fact, the opposite is true: Lorraine's willful denial of Mr. Pignati's death in this dream doesn't actually prevent his death from happening. Furthermore, her refusal to voice her anxieties about death only make them stronger. After Mr. Pignati's death, for example, she retrospectively believes that she had witnessed several "bad omens" that should have warned her about Mr. Pignati's fatal heart attack that occurs at the end of the novel.

Chapter 13 Quotes

I really did think Mr. Pignati would have wanted us to have a few friends over. Of course, he would have liked to be there so he wouldn't feel he was missing anything. I knew how much he'd enjoy hearing about a party when he came home. He'd want to know every little detail, just like he asked about everything we did in school.

Related Characters: John Conlan (speaker), Lorraine Jensen, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 152

Explanation and Analysis

Before John recalls the events of the party he organized at Mr. Pignati's house, he begins with a disclaimer that he "really did think Mr. Pignati would have wanted" John and Lorraine to throw a party—the same flimsy logic he used to persuade Lorraine, who'd been wary of the idea, to go through with it. There's a generous way and a cynical way of interpreting John's disclaimer. On the one hand, John might actually have believed that Mr. Pignati would want them to throw the party. As John explains here, Mr. Pignati was always asking them about school and seemed genuinely interested in their personal and social lives.

On the other hand, it's rather hard to believe that John could sincerely think Mr. Pignati, who was at the time in the hospital recovering from a heart attack, would really be too keen on a bunch of high schoolers coming over to his house, drinking, and making a mess—all without his supervision or knowledge. In this more cynical reading of John's disclaimer, John's logic seems more like a haphazard way to justify his selfish decision to throw a party he had no right to throw. In other words, John's suggestion that he thought Mr. Pignati would have wanted the party is John's way of avoiding responsibility for his ill-advised actions.

Several other broken pigs were laying all over the floor, and the only thing I could think of at that moment was the proud and happy look on Mr. Pignati's face when he had shown us the pigs that first day.

Related Characters: John Conlan (speaker), Lorraine Jensen, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman"), Conchetta Pignati, Norton Kelly

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 164

Explanation and Analysis

This scene takes place during a party that John holds at Mr. Pignati's house. Earlier, notorious troublemaker Norton Kelly arrived at the party uninvited, and when John goes to look for him, he discovers that Norton snuck into the room where Mr. Pignati keeps his cherished collection of pig figurines and broke all the pigs.

This is a significant moment. First, it's the first time John realizes that his carelessness has finally caught up with him in a way he won't be able to walk away from. Lorraine tried to warn John against throwing this party, perhaps anticipating the likelihood that something in Mr. Pignati's house would end up broken or disturbed, but John ignored her. Now, Lorraine's fear has come true: the party got out of hand, and now Mr. Pignati's pig collection has been ruined. The pigs hold tremendous emotional value to Mr. Pignati—he associates them with his late wife, Conchetta—and John instantly knows that it will devastate Mr. Pignati and perhaps irreversibly damage John and Lorraine's friendship with him when he finds out.

But rather than selfishly lament how the broken pigs will affect himself, John instead focuses exclusively on how they'll hurt Mr. Pignati, recalling how "proud and happy" Mr. Pignati looked when he first showed John and Lorraine the pigs. This is a huge shift from John's reaction in that moment—back when Mr. Pignati first showed them the pigs, John had been a bit embarrassed for Mr. Pignati and his pig collection. But knowing what they mean to Mr. Pignati now and developing a better sense of empathy over the course of their friendship has given John a new perspective, which he demonstrates in thinking about how Mr. Pignati will react to the broken pigs instead of how John might be punished for the incident.

Chapter 14 Quotes

I wanted to phone him and say, Mr. Pignati, we didn't mean things to work out like that. We were just playing.

Playing

Related Characters: Lorraine Jensen (speaker), John Conlan, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman")

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 173

Explanation and Analysis

Lorraine has just returned home after the police broke up the party she and John threw at Mr. Pignati's house (without Mr. Pignati's permission) while he was recovering in the hospital. Mr. Pignati arrived early to find his house in shambles and his beloved pig collection destroyed. Now, Lorraine anguishes over the hurt she and John have caused Mr. Pignati and wonders how they could even begin to apologize for their carelessness. At first, Lorraine considers explaining to Mr. Pignati that she and John "didn't mean things to work out" so badly—that they "were just playing."

But, as the repetition of "playing" suggests, Lorraine immediately sees the weakness of such an argument. "Playing," or messing around, is something that children do—not adults. And while children are innocent and therefore needn't accept responsibility for any hurt their "playing" may unintentionally cause, adults should be mature enough to know better and not play around—or if they do play around and make a careless mistake, they should at least be willing to take responsibility for their mistakes. Lorraine thus comes to the conclusion John will eventually reach in the book's closing pages—that they must accept personal responsibility for whatever consequences their actions yield. And, furthermore, that being thoughtless or ignorant doesn't absolve them of that responsibility.

"My father says I have to go to a psychiatrist."

"He'll forget about it in a day or two," I reminded him.

"I know."

Related Characters: John Conlan, Lorraine Jensen (speaker), Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman"), Mr. Conlan ("Bore")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 175

Explanation and Analysis

John and Lorraine meet up for the first time since their party at Mr. Pignati's house, which ended suddenly when Mr. Pignati arrived home early from the hospital and called the police. The police escorted John and Lorraine home and informed their parents what they'd done. When John tells Lorraine that his father has ordered him to see a psychiatrist as punishment, Lorraine assures him that Bore will just forget about it anyway. Lorraine's suggestion is as apt as it is depressing, conveying what little support John receives from his parents.

Though of course it would be no fun for John to see a psychiatrist, doing so could potentially help him to work through some of the personal issues that give him so much pain. So while Bore's forgetfulness works out for John in the short term (John won't have to suffer through invasive and unpleasant therapy sessions), Bore's forgetfulness also highlights just how unsupportive and unconcerned for John's wellbeing his parents are—and how this lack of support is responsible, in part, for a lot of the issues that necessitate John's seeing a psychiatrist in the first place.

Chapter 15 Quotes

Our life would be what we made of it—nothing more, nothing less.

Related Characters: John Conlan (speaker), Lorraine Jensen, Angelo Pignati ("The Pigman")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 193

Explanation and Analysis

This passage is from the last page of the novel. In the aftermath of Mr. Pignati's death from a heart attack, John reflects on how his and Lorraine's actions indirectly caused Mr. Pignati's death. As John conveys here, he and Lorraine have spent much of the novel evading responsibility for their actions, blaming anybody but themselves for the mistakes they've made and continue to make—their parents for not understanding and supporting them, for instance, and various other authority figures for talking down to them. And while Lorraine has consistently been more conscious of how her and John's actions are wrong and could even hurt others, she repeatedly (and willingly) goes along with whatever ill-advised plans John concocts, acting as though she has no choice in the matter and thus indirectly blaming John for her complicity in his antics.

But when Mr. Pignati dies, it makes John realize that all his actions *do* have consequences. The reality is that John and Lorraine did hurt Mr. Pignati's feelings, betray his trust, and put a strain on his heart, even if they didn't mean for these things to happen. And all these factors contributed to the fatal heart attack Mr. Pignati suffers at the end of the novel. Mr. Pignati's irreversible, horribly tragic fate thus teaches

John and Lorraine that their "life would be what [they] made of it—nothing more, nothing less." Even if John and Lorraine's actions lead to consequences they hadn't anticipated, they still have to accept responsibility for those consequences—claiming ignorance or blaming others won't change the outcome of their actions, a bleak fact that Mr. Pignati's death makes clear.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

THE OATH

"The Oath" is dated April 15 and signed by Lorraine Jensen and John Conlan during their sophomore year at Franklin High School. John and Lorraine vow "to record the facts, and only the facts about our experiences with Mr. Angelo Pignati." They note that the librarian, Miss Reillen (whom they call "the Cricket"), is watching their every move and thinks they're using the typewriter to type an English paper.

This opening section of the book builds intrigue, raising questions about who Mr. Angelo Pignati is and why John and Lorraine feel it's so vital to document "the facts, and only the facts about [their] experiences with [him]." It seems that something happened to them that they need to come to terms with, and their acknowledging this suggests a certain self-awareness or growing maturity.

CHAPTER 1

The narrator (John) isn't a big fan of school—actually, he doesn't like much of anything—and this may explain why he got to know "this old guy we nicknamed the Pigman." John used to hate school so much that he would "set off bombs" in the school bathrooms, earning him the name "the Bathroom Bomber." He made the "bombs" out of firecrackers with clay molded around them and candles for fuses—they took about eight minutes to go off, so he'd never get caught. Plus, the Dean would usually blame it on the kids who'd go into the bathroom to sneak cigarettes.

From the start, this narrator (who is soon revealed to be John Conlan) seems like a typical high school student; he claims to hate everything and acts out as a result. And despite the maturity he and Lorraine displayed earlier in their vow to tell the whole truth about whatever happened between themselves and Mr. Pignati, this section reveals that John is still rather immature, causing trouble and then blaming others for his actions.

The narrator (John) was behind other pranks, too, like orchestrating a "supercolossal fruit roll," where kids would roll old apples and oranges down the classroom floor to mess with a substitute teacher. The only time a fruit roll failed was when a retired postman was teaching science class—the man seemed so happy talking about his career at the P.O. that the narrator didn't have the heart to prank him. Anyway, the narrator's pranking days are behind him now that he's a sophomore; the worst thing he does these days is write on desks—which he does now. (The book features a messy, handwritten message that reads: "HELP ME!!! A rotten science teacher has given me a drug to change me into a teeny weeny mosquito," with the text getting smaller and more illegible as the message gets further along.)

John's goofy mosquito message shows his present lack of maturity. Still, though for the most part John seems rather self-involved and immature at this point in the story, his choice not to go through with the "supercolossal fruit roll" suggests that he's capable of some degree of empathy. It seems that hearing the retired postman talk so passionately about his career at the P.O. instilled some compassion in John for the old man, and so he chose to call off the prank and just let the man be.

With that out of the way, the narrator (John) explains, now it's time to curse—something Lorraine has begrudgingly allowed, so long as the narrator censors his swearing with "@#$%." He's okay with this, because the mysteriousness of this message makes it almost better than writing out an actual curse word.

John's need to swear—or at least mystify people—suggests an underlying restlessness and need to get others' attention. It's a bit of a stretch at this point, knowing so little about John, but it's possible that he's not getting the healthy sort of attention and support he needs elsewhere (from his parents, for instance), and so he acts out, swearing and intimidating people, to get the attention he craves.

Next, the narrator (John) explains why he calls Miss Reillen the Cricket. She's a little plump but wears tight skirts anyway, and so her nylons rub together when she walks, making a chirping sound. The narrator ends things here, so he can give Lorraine her turn at the typewriter before she has a heart attack.

Though John has thus far demonstrated a slight capacity for compassion, this passage shows that he is more often cruel and critical of others, seemingly for no reason other than for his own amusement.

CHAPTER 2

Lorraine narrates this chapter. Lorraine knows she shouldn't have let John write the first chapter. He always exaggerates—she's not "about to have a thrombosis." She's just eager to describe the odd past few months they've had. She wants to write it all down before they forget it. And John doesn't really swear that much, it's just that he always has to be doing something quirky. And he gets away with whatever he does since he's so handsome, though Lorraine hates to admit it. He's six feet tall, and he has long brown hair and big, blue eyes.

From the start, Lorraine presents herself as John's opposite: she's reserved and introspective where John is bold and self-absorbed. Though both characters vowed to tell the truth in their written story, it seems that Lorraine is more committed to truth-telling than John, who apparently has a habit of exaggerating and twisting the truth.

An "analyst" would say John's problems stem from his family—that he drinks and smokes to rebel. Lorraine's tried to tell John that smoking is dangerous, and she's even shown him one of Freud's case studies that's similar to John's history. But John wouldn't listen, even after Lorraine showed him a pamphlet about smoking that Lorraine's mother, a nurse, brought home that featured a photo of damaged lungs. Anyway, both John and Lorraine have difficult families, but that's a story for another time.

Lorraine seems to have a more introspective nature and a greater capacity for empathy than John, which she demonstrates in her efforts to get to the bottom of why John smokes cigarettes rather than judging him for it. Still, one thing that John and Lorraine do have in common is that they both struggle with family issues, and perhaps this common struggle draws them together despite their many differences.

Lorraine returns to the subject of John's "distort[ing]" and lying. In their Problems in American Democracy class the other day, Mr. Weiner asked what kind of houses early American settlers lived in, and John answered "tree huts," just to rile everyone up. Lorraine suspects that John "used to distort things physically," like he did with the bombs; now he just distorts things with words.

Lorraine provides further evidence of John's seemingly compulsive lying. Knowing now that John has a difficult home life casts his lying in a more sympathetic light, though it also cautions the reader that John might not be the most reliable narrator.

Like with Miss Reillen. She's really a nice lady. And it's true that her clothes are too tight, but it's not because she's trying to be sexy or anything—it's just that she probably outgrew them. But who knows what she's got going on in her personal life? Maybe she can't afford new ones, or maybe she has a sick mother, like Miss Stewart, the typing teacher. Lorraine knows about Miss Stewart's mother because she dropped off some typing papers at Miss Stewart's house one time and saw Miss Stewart's mother there. Lorraine feels bad when she thinks about Miss Reillen—who'd want to marry someone whose sick mother is always camped out in the living room?

Just as Lorraine earlier considered how John's family struggles might have something to do with his smoking, here Lorraine searches for reasons to explain Miss Reillen's ill-fitting clothing. In so doing, she further demonstrates her capacity for empathy and compassion—two qualities that John mostly lacks.

The biggest difference between John and Lorraine is that Lorraine "ha[s] compassion." Still, the fact that John is friends with Lorraine, who isn't all that pretty (even by Lorraine's mother's admission—Lorraine's mother is constantly calling her fat and slouchy and unattractive) must mean that John has some compassion in him—and he's certainly gotten more compassion ever since he and Lorraine met the Pigman. Lorraine thinks it was probably John's secret compassion that convinced him to introduce himself to her and invite her for a beer in the **Moravian Cemetery** where he always goes to drink beer. It's kind of strange to drink beer in a cemetery, but not really, once you understand John's situation—John's father was a mean alcoholic and set a bad example for John. Now, John's father has sclerosis of the liver and doesn't drink, but John does.

Though readers may have come to this conclusion already, here Lorraine explicitly lays out what most distinguishes her from John: she has compassion and John does not. This scene also sheds light on the details of Lorraine's unhappy family situation: her mother is constantly cruel to her, and Lorraine seems to have internalized that cruelty, seeing herself as flawed and unworthy of friendship—she's so deluded about her self-worth that she thinks John is behaving charitably by being friends with her. This passage also introduces what will become one of the novel's most important symbols: the Moravian Cemetery, foreshadowing the critical thematic role that death will play in the story later on.

Lorraine moved into John's neighborhood at the start of their freshman year. When she met John at the bus stop, she was feeling pretty depressed because nobody was talking to her. She noticed his big blue eyes and knew he was special. Then one day, John sat down next to her on the bus and started laughing, completely out of the blue. Lorraine even looked out the window to see if she'd missed something (a magazine article she read about "mental disturbances" would call this "paranoia").

Lorraine has referenced psychological concepts like "mental disturbances" and "paranoia" multiple times already. Her interest in psychology further illustrates her introspective nature and compassion for others—she's not content simply to judge people for their actions. She wants to know why they do the things they do—John and his seemingly unprompted laughing included.

Lorraine thinks she has paranoia—she always thinks people are laughing at her. Lorraine turned to John then and asked him not to laugh—people will think he's "a lunatic." John calmly replied, "I *am* a lunatic," and then he resumed laughing. Lorraine, irritated and embarrassed, decided to laugh to teach John a lesson, but then she couldn't stop, and then she was actually laughing. The two of them sat there laughing all the way to school, and the entire bus thought they were crazy.

Lorraine's belief that she has paranoia seems to stem from the verbal abuse she endures from her mother—her mother's constant criticism has made Lorraine believe that everyone is making fun of her. However, when Lorraine, despite her initial reservations, ends up laughing along with John, it shows just how powerful human connection can be. Bonding with John, even over something as eccentric and bizarre as involuntary laughter, helps Lorraine to feel a little less alone—their new bond literally transforms her initial irritation and embarrassment at him into genuine laughter.

CHAPTER 3

John narrates this chapter. John confirms Lorraine's observation that he is quite handsome—but it doesn't let him off the hook, except maybe with Miss King, the "old maid" English teacher who always laughs at him and calls him "a card." John likes that the Pigman doesn't try to use modern slang to sound cool—he calls John and Lorraine "delightful." Lorraine is always reading about "nutty people." He'd almost forgotten about the paranoia article she showed him. The only part that stuck out to him was the story about the woman who hoarded towels, sheets, English muffins, and bathrooms. In their friendship, "Lorraine remembers the big words, and [John] remembers the action." This makes sense, since John's going to be an actor and Lorraine's going to be a writer.

Unlike Lorraine, who has internalized her mother's criticism and believes that she's ugly or at least plain, John enthusiastically confirms that he is just as handsome as Lorraine says he is. Further cementing their opposite personalities is John's continued judgment of others. Here, he ridicules Miss King for using (what she thinks is) contemporary slang to try to connect with her students. But what most sticks out in this section is John's more favorable assessment of the Pigman: he was capable of connecting with John and Lorraine, calling them "delightful," without actually trying—something that few adults in their lives seem able to do.

John thinks Lorraine could be more confident—it's crazy the way Lorraine's mother makes it seem like Lorraine is an ugly monster. She has electric green eyes—or she did until Pigman died. John thinks Pigman's death has something to do with Lorraine wanting to be a writer. He and Lorraine have both been a little off since, and they're still trying to figure out why they did what they did.

Though John might be rather self-absorbed and inconsiderate of others' feelings, he clearly does seem to have a soft spot for Lorraine and cares about her, as demonstrated by the compliments he pays her in this section. This passage also gives insight into the profound effect that the Pigman's death had on Lorraine and John, though it's not yet clear when he died or how (or even if) John and Lorraine were involved in the death.

Everything began when Lorraine, John, Dennis Jobin, and Norton Kelly were making prank phone calls last September. They began with simple gags but eventually created a game where the objective was to keep the person on the phone as long as possible. They'd pretend they were calling on behalf of a game show and claimed that the person had won a prize. Dennis lasted the longest, since he happened to dial an old woman who was lonely and just wanted someone to talk to. He made up some horrific story about asking for advice about a rat-transmitted skin disease he was dying from—and kept the woman on the line for over two hours.

Though the teens are calling strangers as part of a prank, the communicative aspect of the game—talking to another person, however inane the conversation may be—speaks to their inner (and perhaps unrealized) desire to connect with others.

Even though Lorraine blames a lot of things on John, she can't blame Pigman's death on him. He would've died anyway, and "you can't really say they murdered him." And it was Lorraine who picked out the Pigman's number to call anyway.

John's attempt to blame the Pigman's death on Lorraine for something as innocuous as dialing a telephone number (which apparently set off a train of events that eventually ended with the Pigman's death) is flimsy at best, and it shows how immature and unwilling to accept personal responsibility John is at this early point in the story.

CHAPTER 4

Lorraine narrates this chapter. Lorraine catches readers up to speed on what John hasn't said about Dennis and Norton—they're "really disturbed." Norton has mean eyes and is an outcast. He's been that way since he was caught stealing a bag of marshmallows from the grocery store and the story made the local paper. He's also the one who found out how to cheat at the phone game, making sure he always picked a woman's name instead of a man's out of the phone book (you're not supposed to look at the name). But one time, Lorraine peeked too—and when she spotted a number with a Howard Avenue address (near Lorraine's house), she dialed it: Pignati Angelo 190 Howard Ave.

True to form, Lorraine can't even call Dennis and Norton "really disturbed" without searching for some underlying psychological explanation for their "disturbed" behavior. Here, she implies that Norton acts out as a defense mechanism against his peers' rejection: in other words, he acts "really disturbed" because he's a social outcast and is hurting emotionally, not because he is a fundamentally bad, "disturbed" kid. This passage also clarifies John's earlier remark about Lorraine technically being responsible for bringing Mr. Pignati into their lives: it was she who intentionally selected his number from the phone book.

When Lorraine called, a cheerful voice answered. Lorraine nervously pretended she was Miss Truman from the Howard Avenue Charities. Mr. Pignati said his wife wasn't home. Lorraine, putting on a false British accent, insisted she wanted to speak with Mr. Pignati, not his wife. But she couldn't keep up the charade and burst out laughing. She tried to cover for herself, pretending that she was laughing at a joke someone in the office just made. Following John's whispered suggestion, she told Mr. Pignati that she was calling on behalf of the "L & J Fund" (the John and Lorraine Fund). But Mr. Pignati played along, asking Lorraine to repeat the joke that had made her laugh—he explained that his wife had loved jokes and that he missed her. His wife, he explained, was visiting her sister in California.

Lorraine assumes a false name as part of her prank, but her unwillingness to use her real name perhaps also gestures toward her low self-esteem: in other words, she uses a false name because she assumes nobody would be interested in talking to her as she is. As well, note Mr. Pignati's willingness to go along with the obvious prank phone call: perhaps he, like the teens, is so starved for human connection that he'll take any opportunity to talk to another person, even if it's just a silly kid calling him as part of a game.

Mr. Pignati kept talking about his wife (using the past tense), telling Lorraine jokes his wife liked. Something about his tone made Lorraine feel sorry for him—he sounded very lonely. By this point, Dennis and Norton had gotten bored and went to watch TV. But John stayed with Lorraine as she talked to Mr. Pignati. As Lorraine continued to talk to Mr. Pignati, making up lies as the conversation went along, she thought about how John was the one who taught her to make stuff up. He was always doing that, like when he claimed that he spilled sugary coffee on his *Johnny Tremain* book report, which cockroaches then ate. Lorraine likes to make stuff up too, but only in her writing.

It's curious that Mr. Pignati is talking about his wife in the past tense—usually, people use the past tense to talk about people who have died or are no longer in their lives. Could Mr. Pignati be lying about his wife visiting relatives out of town? And if so, why? Also, note that while Lorraine clearly disapproves of John's compulsive lying, she's doing it herself anyway. This illustrates how Lorraine's loneliness and desperation to keep John as her friend motivate her to compromise some of her morals.

John, on the other hand, lies constantly, even to his parents. Once, he told his mother he was hearing voices from space; his mother laughed it off as if nothing had happened. But John's parents lie all the time too; John's dad lied when he faked an insurance claim, and Mrs. Conlan always lies to the store clerk about him forgetting to give her Green Stamps. Lorraine thinks this is "subconscious, schizophrenic fibbing," a way John and his parents deal with inner guilt complexes. She hopes she'll never be that kind of adult.

Lorraine sheds more light on John's compulsive lying, suggesting that he learned it from his parents. She also suggests that John's parents' failure to take his lying seriously (his mother simply laughs it off) only encourages John to keep lying. Once more, the novel shows how deeply a person's family can affect their behavior, personality, and development.

Lorraine's focus shifts back to her ongoing phone call. Mr. Pignati asks if Lorraine heard his joke—she hadn't laughed. Lorraine lies and says she heard the joke and that it was very funny. Sensing Lorraine's distracted mood, Mr. Pignati apologizes and says he'll give $10 to the L & J fund. When he asks where to send it, John takes the phone from Lorraine before she can stop him.

What started out as a relatively harmless prank suddenly gets more serious: it seems that John is willing to scam Mr. Pignati out of 10 dollars. Though Lorraine seems less on board with the idea, she repeatedly goes along with whatever John does, regardless of whether it's in line with her personal morals, in order to maintain their friendship. So readers can predict that Lorraine will allow John to escalate this prank on Mr. Pignati, even if she's not comfortable with it.

CHAPTER 5

John narrates this chapter. John arranges for him and Lorraine to go to Mr. Pignati's house to pick up his donation. When the day comes, Lorraine doesn't want to go through with it—she thinks it's wrong to take money from an old man. John insists that they're just "artists" who need "a patron," but Lorraine refuses to play along.

This section displays a darker side of John's lying. Here, he's not just distorting the truth for personal amusement, but in order to justify the immoral action of scamming an old man.

John goes home and asks for some money—he needs cash to pay for a six-pack—but John's mom angrily says he can't have any money until John's father speaks to him. She asks John why he can't be good, like Kenneth (Kenneth is John's older brother who works on Wall Street). When John repeatedly asks why his mom is angry, she says it's because he put glue on the telephone lock (John's dad placed the lock there to punish John for using the phone too much). John insists he's innocent and that the ghost of Aunt Ahra did it. John's mom doesn't buy it. John blames most things on Aunt Ahra, who died in their house when she was 82.

This passage sheds more light on John's misbehavior. It seems that, in part, John's poor behavior is a reaction to his parents (or at least his mother) constantly comparing him to his older, successful brother Kenneth. In addition, readers get a better sense of John's unwillingness to take responsibility for his poor behavior—here, he literally blames his action of tampering with the family phone on his dead aunt.

Not wanting to confront Bore (John's nickname for his dad), John uses a hack to dial the operator on the phone and puts through a call to Lorraine. He rings once and then hangs up—their secret signal for meeting up. A bit later, Lorraine walks up to John at their usual corner; she berates him for smoking. John ignores her and says it's time to collect Mr. Pignati's $10. Lorraine angrily disagrees—Mr. Pignati sounded so lonely. John says this is exactly the reason they should visit him. Then he suggests that Mr. Pignati is suicidal, which Lorraine should know from all the books she reads. Eventually, John wears Lorraine down, and the two of them make their way to Mr. Pignati's house.

Note that this book was first published in 1968, far before the advent of cell phones. The lock that John's father placed on the phone would have been a mechanism that made it impossible to spin the rotary dial of an old telephone. Also note that while Lorraine initially didn't want to go through with scamming Mr. Pignati, she relents and goes along with John's scheme. This passage also paints John's misbehavior in a decidedly negative light: here, he weaponizes Lorraine's concern about Mr. Pignati's mental health (insinuating that he's suicidal) to get Lorraine to compromise on her morals and go along with the scheme.

They arrive at Mr. Pignati's house and find that it's "a phenomenal dump." Lorraine wonders if he doesn't have much money. Or maybe, she suggests, he's "a sex maniac." They ring the doorbell anyway. Mr. Pignati comes to the door. He's a larger man in his late 50s. He has a wide grin on his face as he answers the door. He asks John and Lorraine if they're from the charity, totally unfazed to see that they're kids. They follow him inside.

Lorraine and John both have dysfunctional families, but they deal with them in different ways; whereas John misbehaves, Lorraine responds to her own family issues with fear and anxiety about the world around her, as evidenced by her rather extreme speculation that Mr. Pignati might be "a sex maniac."

Mr. Pignati's house is filled with junk, but it has a nice, welcoming smell to it. Mr. Pignati asks them to sit down on the couch and offers them some homemade wine. John accepts, though Lorraine seems apprehensive—but in reality, John is terrified too. When Mr. Pignati leaves to get the wine, they both turn to each other, terrified. What if Mr. Pignati comes back from the kitchen with a knife and tries to murder them?

Readers should note that while the book doesn't seem to condemn either, it's equally ill-advised to offer alcohol to minors as it is to accept a drink from a stranger. These are two plot points of this decades-old book that haven't aged all that well. Still, John and Lorraine's willingness to put themselves in danger here reflects their desire for companionship and an adult who understands them, even if they don't consciously realize it.

Mr. Pignati returns moments later holding three glasses of wine. He tells John and Lorraine that he just got back from the zoo. He used to go there with his wife, but she's in California visiting her sister. That's why his house is so cluttered—when she's here, she makes him clean up. Mr. Pignati tells the teens that he's a retired electrician. Lorraine, speaking in the English accent she used on her initial phone call with Mr. Pignati, asks how long his wife has been in California. Mr. Pignati says about a month—and as he does, he looks like he's about to cry.

Mr. Pignati's story about his wife being in California seems a little strange—John just described Mr. Pignati's house as "a phenomenal dump" filled with junk. Could the place really have gotten so cluttered in the short time his wife has been away, or is something else going on? It's also strange that Mr. Pignati looks like he's about to cry when he talks about her. Though the exact details remain unclear, it's obvious that Mr. Pignati doesn't feel comfortable talking about whatever is really going on with his wife.

Changing the subject, Mr. Pignati tells Lorraine and John about a game he plays where he tries to memorize 10 items. He asks them to play it with him, urging them to each give him an item. Lorraine says "Girl." John says "Couch." They go on like this until they have 10 items. Then Mr. Pignati repeats the items back to them. As he does, beaming, John thinks the old man looks like a big, stupid baby. John gets even more annoyed when Mr. Pignati takes a piece of paper and shows them how he made a mental picture to remember all the objects. Lorraine tries the trick, but it doesn't work for her—maybe because she's already finished her glass of wine.

The memory game might be a little corny, but it speaks to John's lack of compassion that he responds to the game with disgust rather than patience. Mr. Pignati was just about to cry, and this game has cheered him up. If John were more compassionate, he'd see that and deal with the game, even if he thinks it's boring and uncool.

Mr. Pignati suddenly suggests that they all go to the zoo tomorrow. John, trying to sound impatient, tells Mr. Pignati that they have lots of other stops to make and that they need to get going. Mr. Pignati apologizes and runs to write a check, looking as though he's about to cry. Lorraine is horrified, and even John feels a little bad.

It's unclear whether Mr. Pignati really believes the teens are charity workers or if he's just going along with their game because he wants someone to talk to. Either way, Mr. Pignati's behavior reveals his loneliness: he's willing to hang out with total strangers and give them money just to have someone to talk to.

When Mr. Pignati returns, check in hand, he starts talking about the zoo again. He tells the teens that he loves animals and gets up to show them his pig collection, pointing toward the ridiculously vast collection of clay, porcelain, and glass **pigs** that cover nearly every surface. John is appalled. Lorraine reaches out her hand toward the pigs, and Mr. Pignati excitedly tells her she can pick one up. The teens investigate the pigs more closely and find that they're from places all over the world—Japan, Austria, Germany. They're all kinds of colors, too. Mr. Pignati explains that his wife has collected pigs ever since he bought her her first pig. "Pig. *Pig*nati. Do you get it?" he asks the teens. They do.

This passage reveals the origin of the teens' nickname for Mr. Pignati, The Pigman: his expansive collection of pigs. Though John initially responds negatively to the collection, he can't help but investigate the pigs closer alongside Lorraine. John's interest in the pigs reflects his budding interest in Mr. Pignati himself. Though John went into this simply wanting to pull a prank on an unsuspecting man, this passage foreshadows that Mr. Pignati will become something more important to John and Lorraine as the story continues to unfold.

CHAPTER 6

Lorraine narrates this chapter. After leaving the Pigman's house, John makes Lorraine accompany him to Tony's Market—Tony will sell beer to anyone, and the police never bother him about it. Lorraine urges John to rip up the check, but John reasons that if they don't cash it, Mr. Pignati will know something is fishy and call the police. At Tony's, Lorraine buys a chocolate drink—with her own money—while John cashes the check and uses it to buy beer and a pack of cigarettes. Lorraine waits for him to feel guilty, but he doesn't.

Tony's choice to sell alcohol to minors is, of course, illegal, but from a thematic perspective, it highlights what the book's teenage characters want but rarely get: adults who treat them as equals and listen when they voice their needs (though again, John's desire to drink beer like an adult isn't a need Tony should be meeting).

John asks Lorraine if she wants to go to the zoo. Lorraine, angry, says no. John calls her a killjoy and reasons that they owe it to Mr. Pignati, since they stole from him. When Lorraine starts to argue, John smiles and calls Lorraine "a little schizo today."

It speaks to the depth of Lorraine's loneliness that she willfully hangs out with someone who so consistently manipulates her and invalidates her feelings, though readers should note that the book seems to present John's behavior as harmless "acting out" rather than manipulative cruelty.

When Lorraine returns home at 6:30 that evening, she's shocked to find that Lorraine's mother, a private nurse, is already home. Lorraine's dad is never there, ever since they got a legal separation 15 years ago, and then Lorraine's dad died six years ago. Lorraine's mother asks Lorraine where she's been. Lorraine lies that she went to a drama-club meeting and then to Stryker's Luncheonette. Lorraine's mom is mad—she told Lorraine not to go there, since there are sex-hungry boys there. Lorraine thinks her mom is pretty hung up about men. Lorraine's mom grumbles about an old man she was caring for who just died of cancer. She brushes her hair, which makes Lorraine sad; Lorraine's mom is a pretty woman, but she's troubled and mean, and Lorraine wonders how she got to be this way.

This scene gives insight into Lorraine's earlier fear that Mr. Pignati could be "a sex maniac"—it seems that Lorraine's mother has instilled in her daughter a belief that the world is a dangerous place full of sex-crazed males. Though Lorraine doesn't make the connection explicitly, it seems clear that her mother is really just projecting her own hurt feelings over her separation from Lorraine's father years before. This section also shows the big role that death plays in Lorraine's life: her father died many years ago, and her mother works with (and talks freely about) dying patients. Still, Lorraine's mother doesn't seem all that open to talking to Lorraine about how death and discussion of death affects her daughter, which isn't ideal.

Lorraine's mom tells Lorraine to heat up some water for coffee, then she follows Lorraine into the kitchen. She hands Lorraine two dollars for her school dues and grumbles about how hard and expensive it is to raise a child on her own; she can't even afford new nylons, she says, gesturing toward the ratty old pair she's wearing under her bathrobe. Lorraine's mother asks Lorraine to stay home from school tomorrow to help her clean the house, but Lorraine says she can't—she has a Latin test tomorrow. Irritated, Lorraine's mom protests that Lorraine will never need to know how to speak Latin in the real world. Lorraine keeps quiet, not wanting to incite her mother. She reminds her that she did the laundry yesterday, but it's not good enough for her mother. Lorraine wonders what her mother would think if she knew Lorraine wants to be a writer when she grows up.

Though it is of course difficult to raise a child—and especially as a single mother struggling to make ends meet—it's unfair of Lorraine's mother to put this on Lorraine, who is just a child. Like John, Lorraine doesn't seem to get the emotional support she needs from a parent, and it's clearly had a major effect on her. Lorraine's mother's suggestion that Lorraine skip her Latin test to stay home and clean further shows how Lorraine's wellbeing isn't Lorraine's mother's chief concern. And the effect of this is that Lorraine doesn't feel comfortable opening up to her mother about anything personal, such as her dream of becoming a writer.

Lorraine's mother goes to bed, and Lorraine calls John. She hears yelling in the background; John yells at his dad about accusing him of gluing the telephone lock and tells Lorraine that his parents don't trust him. Lorraine tells John that they can go to the zoo tomorrow after all—she changed her mind and thinks she needs a day off.

John complains that his parents don't trust him—without admitting that they have reason not to trust him. Once more, he demonstrates his unwillingness to take responsibility for his own actions.

John and Lorraine cut school the next day, which is easy, since Deanna Deas, who works in the Dean's office, has a crush on John and won't say anything. John called the Pigman and told him to meet them at the zoo at ten o'clock that morning. They arrive early and sit on a bench. Lorraine polishes her Ben Franklin sunglasses, which make people look at her. She never used to wear eye-catching clothes, but she's worn these ever since meeting John, who's always wearing zany, attention-grabbing accessories. Lorraine doesn't really want to be at the zoo—she's an animal person and hates seeing them trapped in their cages.

Lorraine's quirky glasses are a visual reminder of her willingness to go along with whatever John wants for the sake of his friendship. Lorraine doesn't like to stick out—and she doesn't even want to be at the zoo—yet she does these things anyway to keep John hanging out with her. Once more, the book underscores the suffering that loneliness causes and the human need for friendship and connection. Lorraine's sympathy for the caged zoo animals further highlights her compassionate nature.

A short while later, Mr. Pignati arrives and greets them, a wide, excited smile on his face. He asks if they want any snacks. Thinking back, Lorraine realizes there were bad omens about how all this would end even during the zoo visit, but she had no way of knowing it then. The first bad omen is when the woman selling peanuts is antagonistic toward Lorraine—Lorraine thinks the woman probably hates kids. The second bad omen is when a peacock, determined to steal Lorraine's peanuts, attacks her. And the third omen happens when they go to the nocturnal room of the Mammal House and see a weird little kid there. Instead of staring at the vampire bats, he stares at Lorraine, a smirk on his face, as though she's the animal in the cage.

Lorraine's fixation on bad omens seems a product of her mother's warped view of the world. She's effectively taught her daughter that the world is a bad place where danger lurks around every corner, and as a result, Lorraine has become anxious and afraid of a lot of things and unable to enjoy what would otherwise be a low-stakes, fun trip to the zoo.

But John and Mr. Pignati remain unaware of these omens and have a great time. In the snake house, Lorraine lets them go on ahead as she investigates a "snake quiz" on the wall. After they're finished looking at the reptiles, Mr. Pignati announces that he'd like John and Lorraine to meet Bobo, his "best friend." Mr. Pignati leads them to the monkey house and stops outside a large cage. "Bobo?" calls Mr. Pignati. Finally, an ugly, mean-looking baboon emerges and walks toward Mr. Pignati. Mr. Pignati tosses peanuts to Bobo, who screeches and bares his monstrous teeth. Sometimes he catches the peanuts. Sensing that Mr. Pignati is going to spend a while with Bobo, Lorraine and John move on ahead, but Mr. Pignati hardly notices.

Interspecies friendships can of course be highly rewarding and meaningful, but it does seem rather sad that Mr. Pignati's "best friend" is a mean old baboon who seems invested in the friendship mostly for the peanuts Mr. Pignati throws his way. With this scene, it becomes even more apparent why Mr. Pignati is so enthusiastic to hang out with John and Lorraine: he's starved for human connection and incredibly lonely.

John and Lorraine leave the monkey house and ride a train-like contraption around the zoo to pass the time. But when they return to the monkey house, Mr. Pignati is still tossing peanuts to Bobo. John decides to chat with a nearby gorilla. Lorraine joins in, calling out, "Uggauggaboo." Before long, Mr. Pignati joins in, as do Bobo and some of the neighboring chimpanzees. Lorraine thinks they're going to make the roof of the monkey house collapse. When it's time to leave, Mr. Pignati tells Bobo he'll miss him. Bobo's face falls when he realizes he won't get any more peanuts that day.

This moment, however silly, marks a key development in John and Lorraine's relationship with Mr. Pignati. Screeching like monkeys together is a bonding experience for them all. It seems that what began as an impersonal, thoughtless attempt to scam an unsuspecting stranger could develop into something more meaningful, perhaps even a genuine friendship.

CHAPTER 7

John narrates this chapter. John doesn't believe in Lorraine's talk of omens. He thinks they're her way of "distorting" the truth, like she accuses him of doing. The only difference between his lies and hers are that hers are "eerie"—they make a person uneasy. Besides, John had fun at the zoo, and he think it's nice that Mr. Pignati and Bobo are friends. Plus, Mr. Pignati bought John and Lorraine a bunch of treats, like ice cream and cotton candy. And at the end of the trip, they finally told Mr. Pignati to call them by their first names, John and Lorraine.

John makes an insightful point about Lorraine's omens: for as introspective as Lorraine often is, she remains blind to the way her unexamined fears and anxieties skew her perception of the world. It's clear that both teens have a lot of complicated feelings about their place in the world that they don't know how to deal with, so they respond by "distorting" reality into something they can manage. Finally, note John and Lorraine's decision to tell Mr. Pignati their real names—a sign that they're getting more comfortable with him.

Lorraine and John go to Mr. Pignati's house after school the next day, but they don't get there until seven o'clock, as they run into Dennis and Norton, who want to share a beer in the **cemetery** with them. They have their beer at Masterson's Tomb, where all the Mastersons are buried. The tomb is a grand building made of marble. John loves cemeteries.

One can't be in a cemetery without thinking of the death it represents—yet none of the teens talks about death while they hang out at Masterson's Tomb, further developing the idea that despite death's major presence in the lives of the book's main characters, nobody feels comfortable talking about it outright.

Once, John ran ahead of Lorraine and everyone else and hid in an overgrown part of the **cemetery**. He reclined back and looked up at the stars and felt the magnitude of the universe. He wondered if anyone was up there. And he wondered if anyone was *down* there, imagining what might remain of the corpse that could be buried beneath him. But John realized he wasn't really thinking about the hypothetical corpse—he was thinking about what would happen to him after he died. He likes the thought of an afterlife—of something more interesting than just "decaying." Maybe that's why he likes cemeteries so much.

This scene shows that John does have a lot of thoughts about death—troubling ones, even—yet he feels the need to keep them to himself, perhaps not wanting others to see him as strange or morbid. But it's clear that keeping his thoughts to himself hasn't made them go away—to the contrary, it seems that John's unwillingness to open up to others only makes him think about death more, and not necessarily in a positive way.

Back in the present, John and Lorraine finally manage to break away from Norton and Dennis, but now they can't go straight to the Pigman's, since Lorraine has to check in with Lorraine's mother first. Lorraine lies and tells her mother she's going to the library. Over dinner, the Old Lady orders John not to play with his food. John protests, and Bore, who's still fuming over John gluing the phone lock, breaks his silence to yell at John. The Old Lady beams as she announces that Bore sold more than 300 lots today—Bore has a seat on the Coffee Exchange, and he's in a good mood if he sells more than 200 lots in a day. Bore moves to have a talk with John, and the Old Lady, nervous, suddenly gets up to fetch the dessert.

This dinner scene gives readers a better sense of John's family dynamic. Bore is justifiably upset with John for tampering with the telephone, but it seems that regardless of what John has or hasn't done, Bore's temper is volatile and intense—a fact that John's mother's nervousness makes clear. Her reaction also suggests that John doesn't really have an ally in his household—he has no parental figure to listen to or support him, and this helps explain why he misbehaves all the time. He just wants someone to notice and respond to him.

Bore tells John that John gets in trouble because he has too much free time. He asks John if he'd like to work at the Exchange after school some days. This is the last thing John wants. John tells Bore he has no interest in working at the Exchange because all he really wants is to be an actor—everyone thinks he'd be great at it, since he's so creative. Bore scoffs and tells John, "Try eating your imagination when you're hungry sometime." John protests that he doesn't want to be just some "phony in the crowd." Bore replies that he's just trying to make John learn to work.

Statistically speaking, John's goal of becoming an actor is rather lofty and impractical, but it's still cruel and unsupportive of Bore to so readily dismiss John's dream. While Bore may just be looking out for his son's future, the way he goes about it only shows John that his father doesn't care about him as a person and that his dreams don't matter.

Just then, the Old Lady appears in the doorway asking if John and Bore would like whipped cream and nuts on their strawberry whirls. John asks if she means real whipped cream or the awful, processed, fake kind. John says he should be nicer to his mother—he'll regret being rude to her when she's dead one day. John protests that he's just trying to "be individualistic." He begs Bore to give him a little more time to figure out who he is. Bore only orders John to bring his plate out to the kitchen. John does so. In the kitchen, his mom silently appraises John's face to see what kind of mood John left Bore in. She suggests that John go work on his homework at a friend's house—Bore works hard, and John should try not to upset him so he can relax. John agrees.

John isn't always the most sympathetic character—it's objectively rude and ungrateful of him to insult the food his mother prepared for the family. But the fact remains that he's still a kid trying to figure things out—meanwhile, his parents are adults and should know that they're not giving John the love and emotional support he needs to mature and thrive.

At Mr. Pignati's later that evening, John forgets all about Bore and the Old Lady. Mr. Pignati offers Lorraine and John some wine, and they gladly accept. John compliments Mr. Pignati's house, and Mr. Pignati offers to give them a tour. He shows them all around and tells them to make themselves at home. At one point, Mr. Pignati offers Lorraine a bowl of small round things floating in what looks like spaghetti sauce. She eats some and asks what they are. When Mr. Pignati replies that they're scungilli, something similar to snails, Lorraine's face turns white, and she excuses herself to use the bathroom.

John's polite behavior at Mr. Pignati's house shows what difference having a kind, attentive adult around can have on a kid's behavior. John is polite and kind to Mr. Pignati because Mr. Pignati is kind to him—meanwhile he acts out at home because he feels unheard, lonely, and not taken seriously.

John spots a picture of a young girl wearing a confirmation dress and asks who it is. Mr. Pignati stops smiling. He pauses a moment and then explains that it's his wife, Conchetta. It was the only photo she liked of herself. Then he gets up, looking as though he's about to cry, and tells John to go check out the upstairs.

Again, Mr. Pignati can't bear to talk about his wife without tearing up, further suggesting that something strange is going on—it's increasingly clear that Conchetta isn't in California like Mr. Pignati claims she is.

Upstairs, John asks Lorraine if she's found anything interesting. She's not sure. John pokes around himself. In the bedroom, he finds a closet full of old dresses and a bed covered in a ruffly bedspread. On a dresser, there's a drawer full of papers. He spots a pamphlet that reads "WHAT EVERY FAMILY SHOULD KNOW." Wanting to know what it's about, John opens the pamphlet, which is full of questions about **cemetery** preferences and caskets. It makes him think about how his high school assigns all these dumb book reports, but no one would know what to do if anyone died. Elsewhere in the drawer, John finds a bunch of jewelry—it seems like Mr. Pignati's wife didn't take anything with her to California. Finally, John finds a bill from the Silver Lake funeral home—for the funeral of Conchetta Pignati.

As readers may have guessed by now, Conchetta is dead, not in California. Just like John is unable to talk about his fears about his own death, Mr. Pignati is unable to talk about—or even consciously acknowledge to himself—Conchetta's death. Instead, he mourns her death alone and in silence, prolonging his grief and his loneliness. Tension builds as the reader wonders what John will do with this new information—will he tell Lorraine? Will he confront Mr. Pignati about Conchetta and try to comfort him? And how will this affect the teens' new friendship with Mr. Pignati?

CHAPTER 8

Lorraine narrates this chapter. John tells Lorraine about the funeral bill, and a chill runs down her spine—she'd suspected that Conchetta might not really be on vacation, since Mr. Pignati looks like he's about to cry every time he mentions her. Just then, Mr. Pignati returns with more wine. He tells them a joke about a know-it-all wife, but Lorraine can't bring herself to laugh—she can't stop thinking about the little girl in the picture who had grown up, gotten married, and was already dead. Lorraine thinks about old married couples who die only months apart; she imagines "the love between a man and a woman must be the strongest thing in the world." But then she thinks about her parents and changes her mind.

That Lorraine suspected that Conchetta might be dead even before John tells her illustrates the perceptive, compassionate traits that define Lorraine's character—she's sensitive to the people around her, even if she doesn't quite know how to help them work through their difficult feelings. Meanwhile, Mr. Pignati's impulse to drink wine and joke around to lighten the mood shows that he's not any better at navigating his complex feelings of grief—unable to confront the reality of Conchetta's death, he represses it and, in so doing, prevents himself from working through his grief in a healthy way.

Lorraine returns home that night and thinks about everything Mr. Pignati and Conchetta must have shared together. They must have prepared meals together. Lorraine has heard that good food makes good conversation, and she figures this is why she and Lorraine's mother don't get along—all they eat is canned soup and instant coffee.

Each time the teens return home, they immediately compare the happiness and connection they felt at Mr. Pignati's house to the lack of happiness and connection they feel at home. Their parents are failing them, even if they don't mean to.

The next morning, Lorraine's mother grumbles about her current patient, an old man who's dying but is pretty handsy. Lorraine offers to make her mother eggs, but Lorraine's mother says she'll just eat at the patient's house—the man's wife is being extra nice to her, since it's been hard to keep a nurse around for long. Before leaving, Lorraine's mother tells her to clean the floor and not to open the door for anyone.

It's unclear whether the old man really is trying to touch Lorraine's mother inappropriately or if she's projecting her broader mistrust of men onto her patient. Either way, she seems not to notice or care how her talking about this sensitive subject might affect her young daughter.

Lorraine watches Lorraine's mother waiting at the bus stop and thinks about how hard her mother has said it is to be a nurse—how you get varicose veins from being on your feet all day. Looking at her mother now, Lorraine can see how hard her mother's life is, and it's easy to feel sorry for her. Still, Lorraine's mother picks on her all the time, and Lorraine often cries herself to sleep. But lately, she's been thinking about the Pigman, and it makes her feel better. Lorraine wishes her mom knew how to have fun like him.

It's especially impressive that as a young person—and someone who has endured so much of her mother's cruelty—Lorraine is able to set aside her feelings of hurt and empathize with her mother's difficult life. But while Lorraine can understand her mother's behavior on an intellectual level, it still hurts her. This is why she thinks about the Pigman so often—he gives her the comforting, stable environment that her mother fails to provide.

Lorraine does some work around the house and then meets the Pigman and John at the Staten Island ferryhouse, where the Pigman said he'd meet them after he went to the zoo to feed Bobo. John loves the ferryhouse, as it's full of homeless people. John makes them tell their whole life story before he gives them a nickel. Once, they met a homeless man who said people called him Dixie, because he was from the south. He said he used to be a college professor but then took LSD and "lost his power of concentration," and that ended his career. Lorraine felt inspired to write a story about the man, but John said not to bother—the same man had come up to him another time and said his name was "Confederate" and told a totally different story.

The novel's treatment of the homeless man is rather unsympathetic (the book disparagingly refers to the man as a "bum"). It seems to portray Lorraine's instinctual compassion for the man as naïve or foolish, perhaps suggesting that the man is crazy or scheming and therefore undeserving of Lorraine's compassion. Again, The Pigman *is a relatively old young adult novel, and contemporary readers may find that some parts of it haven't aged well, this scene being one of them.*

Mr. Pignati arrives, and he, John, and Lorraine catch the 11:45 ferry to Manhattan. Lorraine decided she had to go on this trip to Beekman's because if she didn't, John would charge half the store. It's not that John would do this to be mean, it's just that he's not used to people giving him stuff the way Mr. Pignati does. The ferry docks, and the three of them walk to Beekman's. On the way there, Lorraine sees another woman: a woman talking to herself about God, and how God told her "death is coming." Lorraine thinks it's funny that now, talking to God makes people think you're crazy—but before, they'd call you a prophet.

Lorraine claims that she only went on this trip to make sure that John didn't spend too much of Mr. Pignati's money, but it could also be that she feels guilty about wanting to go on the trip and so has made up this excuse about monitoring John to assuage her guilt. John is the more overtly selfish, irresponsible one of the book's two main characters, but Lorraine too evades personal responsibility, albeit in more subtle ways. The woman talking to God about how "death is coming" gives this otherwise cheerful outing an ominous backdrop.

Lorraine, John, and Mr. Pignati arrive at Beekman's and go to the fancy-food section. Mr. Pignati happily tells the teens they've got to try the frogs' legs with ricotta cheese, and Lorraine wants to vomit. He gets some bean soup, bamboo shoots, and other things that Lorraine finds disgusting. John, ever trying to be zany, picks out a carton of tiger milk and some chocolate-covered ants. Mr. Pignati is more than happy to pay. Lorraine looks at a can of Love'n Nuts and a box of Jamboree Juicy Jellies. Mr. Pignati, noticing, grabs the packages and places them in his cart. Lorraine insists that he doesn't have to spend money on them, but Mr. Pignati brushes this off. Lorraine feels uncomfortable; nobody has ever bought her stuff she wants before.

John is far more comfortable accepting Mr. Pignati's gifts than Lorraine, but it's clear that both kids relish the opportunity to have an adult be nice to them and listen to their wants and needs; they don't get that from their own parents. Mr. Pignati, meanwhile, doesn't seem to mind spending money if it means he can spend time with other people. Though Mr. Pignati and John and Lorraine come from different walks of life, they share a desire for human connection and friendship.

As they pass through the women's underwear section to get to the toy section, a saleswoman mistakenly calls Lorraine Mr. Pignati's daughter. Lorraine quickly corrects her, then when Mr. Pignati's face falls, Lorraine stammers that she's actually Mr. Pignati's niece, which seems to cheer him up. The woman asks if she's interested in some nylon stockings. Lorraine tries to say no, but Mr. Pignati insists. Finally, Lorraine says yes and asks for a pair that's clearly too big for her. Lorraine wonders what lie she'll make up when Lorraine's mother asks how Lorraine managed to buy her the stockings.

Lorraine's quickness to correct herself by pretending to be Mr. Pignati's relative shows her sensitivity to others' feelings, to the point that she's willing to lie to cheer up the old man. Lorraine's choice to buy a larger size of nylons suggests that she's getting them in her mother's size, further demonstrating the compassion for others that defines Lorraine's character.

After they check out the toy department, Mr. Pignati asks if they can go to the pet shop. John groans, but Lorraine says yes. There, they find a tank full of piranhas and a cage of monkeys. "My little Bobo," Mr. Pignati says to one of the monkeys. The three monkeys look terrified and cling tightly to one another. Watching them makes Lorraine smile. They look so lonely. John suggests Lorraine offer them some of her snacks. She agrees, and John hands some of the nuts to Mr. Pignati. But then a "nasty floorwalker" yells at them not to feed the monkeys. When John asks why, the floorwalker says, "Because I told you not to, that's why." Lorraine knows that John hates this—instead of giving a real explanation, the man just wanted to boss a kid around.

This passage further illustrates John's and Lorraine's opposite personalities. John is selfish and audibly unenthusiastic to do anything that Mr. Pignati wants to do that doesn't benefit John personally. Lorraine, meanwhile, feels grateful to Mr. Pignati for all he's done for her and John and feels obligated to let him pick the next place they browse. This scene also offers an additional example of John's lack of personal responsibility: he seems to think the floorwalker owes him a sophisticated explanation for yelling at him, completely ignoring the fact that he was in the wrong when he fed the monkeys snacks.

They go to the sports department next. There, Mr. Pignati buys roller skates for the three of them, explaining to the teens that he used to love roller skating when he was younger. Lorraine wants to tell the old man not to waste his money, but she decides it's better to let him have fun if he wants. John tells the salesman that they'll all wear their skates out—even though they're on the fifth floor. Lorraine tries to protest, calling him "crazy." The minute she says it, she can tell that if she doesn't go along with John's plan, he'll be disappointed—that she goes along with his crazy antics is the thing he likes best about her. So Lorraine sighs and agrees to wear her skates out of the store. As the three of them skate out together, Lorraine imagines they look like three silly monkeys.

This is another scene that hasn't aged all that well. This subtle interaction between John and Lorraine is a bit more troubling than the book makes it out to be—it basically suggests that John and Lorraine's entire friendship is based on Lorraine doing whatever John wants, even if it makes her uncomfortable. Healthy friendships have foundations of mutual respect—they don't fall apart the minute one friend fails to tend to the other friend's every need. With that being said, the final image of John, Lorraine, and Mr. Pignati is highly significant. It mirrors the earlier scene where they all howled like baboons together and shows the reader that the friendship between Mr. Pignati and the teens is continuing to deepen the more they bond over shared, happy experiences.

The chapter transitions into a letter written to an advice column called *Dear Alice*. The writer, a mother, explains that she's worried about her young son who loves playing with a doll she bought him for Christmas. The woman's husband hates it, and other adults have been making mean comments about it too—but the woman sees nothing wrong with it. Why can a little girl play "Cowboys and Indians" and people laugh and say she's a "tomboy," but when a little boy plays with a doll people "say he's queer?" asks the woman.

Modern readers may find that this is another scene that hasn't aged all that well, for a number of reasons. Anybody can play with dolls—they're inanimate, un-gendered playthings; calling someone gay ("queer") shouldn't be an insult; and the game of "Cowboys and Indians" has its roots in an often racist, colonial mythology of the American West. With all that being said, this scene also gestures toward the theme of families misunderstanding and potentially harming their children.

CHAPTER 9

John narrates this chapter. He reveals that it was he who cut out the "Dear Alice" column. It reminded him of Norton, who played with dolls when he was a kid—and who, like the letter-writer's child, also has his mother to blame for that. He only stopped once people started making fun of him. Then, he turned into a "tough guy" and started getting into fights and shoplifting. John thinks Norton could become a murderer when he grows up—so it's understandable that he's a bit apprehensive when Norton asks John to have a beer with him in the **cemetery**, just the two of them. This happens about a month after John and Lorraine first meet Mr. Pignati.

Again, contemporary readers may find John's insinuation that Norton's old habit of playing with dolls is abnormal or something to be ashamed of rather dated. Nonetheless, the idea that Norton's "tough guy" mentality is the result of his being bullied resonates with the book's broader theme of compassion, illustrating the negative consequences of not treating people with kindness and respect.

Norton asks John why John and Lorraine spend so much time around Mr. Pignati's house. John says Mr. Pignati is just nice is all, but Norton won't back down. He asks John if Mr. Pignati has anything worth stealing. John says no and mumbles something about tools, but this catches Norton's attention—DD, the "lunatic" guy who pretends he's the leader of a mob but really just buys hubcaps and radios that kids steal, could be interested in tools. John thinks that Norton has "reached a new peak of ugliness[.]" Norton asks more questions about "that screech owl" (Lorraine) and John's relationship with Mr. Pignati. John says not to call Lorraine a screech owl and makes a jab at Norton about his infamous marshmallow theft, which shuts him up.

At the beginning of the story John lacked compassion and acted mostly out of self-interest. But the way he tries to protect Mr. Pignati against Norton—and his anger when Norton calls Lorraine a "screech owl"—shows that the past month he and Lorraine have spent getting to know Mr. Pignati has caused John to mature and become more empathetic and mindful of others' wellbeing.

But Norton isn't finished talking about Mr. Pignati. If John doesn't give Norton more information about him, says Norton, then he and Dennis might pay the man a visit on their own. Unfazed, John gets up, sarcastically thanks Norton for the beer, and leaves, calling Norton "Marshmallow Kid" as he walks away. John knows Norton has to pretend he hasn't heard this last bit.

John's new empathy for others doesn't extend to Norton—John uses the "Marshmallow Kid" nickname that Norton is so insecure about to hurt Norton's feelings. So, while John has undoubtedly matured somewhat, he still has a long way to go. Sometimes, adults have to be the bigger person and be empathetic toward people they dislike or who they feel don't deserve their empathy, and John's not yet willing to do that.

As he walks, John wonders why he's so messed up—like why he drinks, for example. He thinks back to Bore finding amusement in giving 10-year-old John sips of beer, joking to his friends about how John would grow up to be a drinker. When Bore got sclerosis of the liver, he stopped drinking—but John didn't. And before John knew it, his parents seemed old to him—they didn't argue anymore and just seemed tired all the time. John feels "out of place" at home. When John lights a cigarette, John's mom is only worried about him burning a hole in the floor. In general, she's only ever worried that he'll "disturb" his father or mother. But then there's the Pigman, who always tells John to make himself at home and take anything out of the fridge that he likes. John knows that he'll kill Norton if he does anything to hurt the Pigman.

This scene further demonstrates John's growing introspection. Though he's not yet willing to give up the harmful coping mechanisms (drinking and smoking) he's developed to cope with his inner struggles, he's at least willing to acknowledge that such coping mechanisms are unhealthy and the result of more serious underlying issues, such as his troubled home life and emotionally unavailable parents. And in the Pigman, John seems to have found an adult who can give him the support and comfort his parents cannot, optimistically suggesting that John, with Mr. Pignati's help, might be able to work through some of the unaddressed issues that have plagued him throughout his adolescence.

CHAPTER 10

Lorraine narrates this chapter. She and John start going over to Mr. Pignati's house after school for wine and conversation. It's cold by the time the holiday season approaches, and it's nice to have somewhere warmer than Masterson's Tomb to hang out. One night, Lorraine's mother confronts her about where she's been. Lorraine lies about going to Latin club. Her mother says she saw a girl who looked just like Lorraine in a car, "necking like a slut." She doesn't ever want to catch Lorraine in a car with a boy.

As far as readers know, Lorraine hasn't had any romantic relationships (not that there's anything wrong or shameful about romance or "necking"). Even so, Lorraine's mother projects her biased, over-generalized hatred of men and sexual intimacy onto Lorraine, essentially blaming Lorraine for perceived misdeeds that Lorraine hasn't even committed. Once more, Lorraine's mother's unwarranted criticism of Lorraine shows that she's too caught up in her own issues to adequately support her daughter.

Lorraine's mother is always warning her about boys and their dirty minds. But now, Lorraine can understand why her mother acts this way. It's not that she hates men—she hates Lorraine's father. When Lorraine's mother was pregnant with Lorraine, the doctor called and said that Lorraine's father had caught a disease, and that's when Lorraine's mother found out about Lorraine's father's girlfriend. Lorraine's parents separated, and everyone was shocked, since they'd been childhood sweethearts. It must have been very painful for her mother, Lorraine thinks, to find out about her father's infidelity. There's one photo of Lorraine's parents together when they were young, and they look happy together; this is how Lorraine likes to remember them.

Though Lorraine is only a teenager, she's far more introspective and observant that her mother. She likely correctly identifies her mother's hatred of men and sex as her mother's over-generalized response to Lorraine's father's infidelity. Lorraine's empathy and compassion for someone who repeatedly hurts her is a testament to Lorraine's introspective nature and maturity, two traits that have defined her character thus far, particularly compared to John (at least the way John was at the beginning of the story).

Lorraine's mother notes that she got a run in a pair of her new stockings—a way of indirectly thanking Lorraine for the gift, Lorraine knows. But she also asks Lorraine to remind her where she got the money for them. Lorraine lies that she walked to school instead of taking the bus, and her mother scolds her for not using her money for its intended purpose. Plus, it's not right for a girl to walk the streets alone. Lorraine stays silent and just thinks about how much she's looking forward to going to Mr. Pignati's—he's always asking Lorraine and John what they want, promising to get them anything. Even John has started to buy his own six-packs of beer. Lorraine has been bringing chips and other snacks all along, feeling rude about taking advantage of Mr. Pignati's kindness.

This passage confirms that Lorraine had her mother in mind when, at the department store in Manhattan, she asked the saleswoman for nylons that were several sizes too big for her. It speaks to Lorraine's sense of empathy that she thought of her mother rather than herself in that situation, especially given her mother's unrelenting criticism and cruelty toward her. As with John, Lorraine thinks of the happier, more stable environment of Mr. Pignati's house to weather the dysfunction she experiences while at home. And as this passage shows, having a reliably stable environment causes the teens to flourish—they become more self-sufficient and generous, bringing food to Mr. Pignati's house to share and not relying on him to provide it (though of course, John's habit of underage drinking is still unhealthy, even if he self-funds it).

Everything is going great until January, when John and Lorraine stop by Mr. Pignati's one evening and find him looking sad and sick. He tries to smile, but it's clear he feels down in the dumps. Mr. Pignati explains to the teens that he went to the zoo earlier that day and Bobo wouldn't eat. Lorraine looks at the snow falling outside and thinks about the old lady in Manhattan saying, "Death is coming." Lorraine gets up and goes to the kitchen to prepare some food, wanting desperately to cheer everyone up. Some inane TV show is playing in the background, with a starlet singing, "Hurrah for Hollywood," accompanied by hundreds of chorus boys.

Bobo's refusal to eat, as Lorraine's flashback to the old lady in Manhattan suggests, foreshadows ominous events to come. Readers have known since the book's beginning that Mr. Pignati will eventually die (it was his death that prompted John and Lorraine to write their confession in the first place), so it's a fair guess that this scene foreshadows his eventual death, too. As well, it seems like a bad sign that Bobo isn't eating, so it's possible that he is in poor health, too. Thus far, the book has emphasized the destructive, negative effects of loneliness and the conversely healing power of friendship, so it makes sense that Mr. Pignati's worry for Bobo, his self-declared "best friend" (and the grief he'd experience if Bobo were to die) could have a devastating effect on Mr. Pignati's health.

Lorraine returns to the living room with a plate and offers John a piece of candy. John is entranced by the starlet on TV, so Lorraine whispers to get his attention—she thinks now is a good time to talk to Mr. Pignati. John looks nervous but takes the lead, explaining to Mr. Pignati that he and Lorraine have something they'd like to say—they have guilty consciences over it, since Mr. Pignati has been so nice to them. First, he admits that he and Lorraine aren't really charity workers—they're high school kids. Mr. Pignati looks sad, and John apologizes for lying. John and Lorraine try to explain themselves, but Mr. Pignati just stares at them in silence.

Though John and Lorraine have grown steadily closer to Mr. Pignati, this scene marks a major turning point in their relationship. In coming clean to Mr. Pignati about their real names and their status as high school students, John and Lorraine symbolically show that they're ready to be more vulnerable and honest around Mr. Pignati and accept him as a friend. Mr. Pignati's initial silence is somewhat ambiguous—it could be that he's hurt to learn that the teens have lied to him, or it could also be that their sudden honesty makes him uncomfortable—he could be considering the ways in which he, too, has been dishonest with them, namely by lying about Conchetta being dead.

When Mr. Pignati finally speaks, he mutters something about Conchetta always keeping the house so clean. John and Lorraine look at each other—it's the first time Mr. Pignati has mentioned his wife in months. Mr. Pignati continues, explaining that he had the bakery make a special cake for their anniversary. He says he and Conchetta loved each other and didn't need anyone else. Then he starts to cry. Lorraine and John walk over to comfort him, and then Mr. Pignati admits that Conchetta is dead. In a soft and tender voice, John says, "We're sorry," which deeply touches Lorraine.

This is a big moment for Mr. Pignati. To cope with Conchetta's death, he oscillates between two extremes, both of which deny the reality of her death: intentionally not talking about her and wiping her from his mind, and pretending that she is alive (as he symbolically does when he orders the special anniversary cake from the bakery). Now, he comes clean to John and Lorraine—and to himself—about Conchetta's death. Though it's painful for him to do, acknowledging her death and allowing his new friends to comfort him could put him on a path toward working through his grief in a healthy way.

Not knowing how to fill the silence, Lorraine offers another piece of candy to John, which he accepts. Then she tells him it's chocolate-covered ants, which sends John sprinting to the kitchen sink to spit it out; Mr. Pignati laughs, and Lorraine is happy to have lightened his mood. John takes a long time to return to the living room. When he does, he flies in on roller skates, which makes Mr. Pignati laugh even harder.

John and Lorraine's company—and in this passage specifically, their comedic antics—helps Mr. Pignati to cope with his grief over Conchetta in a healthy, productive way, as evidenced by his laughter.

Mr. Pignati wants to join in on the fun and passes around pencils and paper to play another memory game. He tells them to number from one to five, and how they complete the game will say what kind of person they are. He orders them to listen closely and then tells them a "murder story," emphasizing certain words in the story. In the story, a WIFE crosses a bridge over the river to see her LOVER while her HUSBAND is out of town. When she tries to go home, an ASSASSIN is waiting for her on the bridge. She tries to cross the river on a boat, but the BOATMAN demands money, which she doesn't have. She returns to her LOVER to ask him for money, but he says it's her fault for getting herself in this situation. She tries to cross the bridge again, and the ASSASSIN stabs her in the chest with a knife.

Mr. Pignati's memory games might be corny and not all that fun for John and Lorraine, but symbolically, the act of playing a game together represents the healing, restorative effects of friendship. Playing the game allows Mr. Pignati to get rid of his loneliness and work through his grief over Conchetta in a healthy, productive way.

Mr. Pignati finishes the story and then tells the teens to list the characters in the order of most to least guilty. Lorraine lists 1. BOATMAN, 2. HUSBAND, 3. WIFE, 4. LOVER, 5. ASSASSIN. John lists 1. BOATMAN, 2. LOVER, 3. ASSASSIN, 4. WIFE, 5. HUSBAND. Mr. Pignati laughs when he sees their lists. He explains that whichever character is most guilty says something about what's most important to you in life. Because John and Lorraine both chose the boatman, it means magic is most important to them. The other answers are WIFE = FUN; HUSBAND = LOVE; LOVER = SEX; ASSASSIN = MONEY; BOATMAN = MAGIC. John and Lorraine laugh along with Mr. Pignati, though the game is only kind of fun.

Readers may find the values Mr. Pignati has assigned to the characters rather ethically dubious—that the husband represents "love" insinuates that he paid an assassin to murder his wife out of "love" (or rather, heartbreak over her infidelity), but murder should never be a solution to marital strife or a broken heart. With that being said, readers can interpret John and Lorraine valuing "magic" most of all a number of ways. For one, it could reflect their need to escape reality, namely their unhappy home lives.

Afterward, John starts roller skating, flying down the hall and around the house while Lorraine and Mr. Pignati watch TV. But eventually, Lorraine puts on her skates and joins John, and then Mr. Pignati follows suit. In all the excitement, Lorraine forgets that Mr. Pignati had already gone to the zoo that day, and shoveled the driveway, and that he's so old. The three of them play tag, laughing as they chase one another around the house. Finally, John runs up the stairs, and Mr. Pignati bounds up behind him. But then Mr. Pignati suddenly stops. He tries to speak, but only a low moan comes out. He reaches out for Lorraine and then collapses to the floor, clutching his hand to his chest.

Here Lorraine's many "bad omens" come to fruition: Mr. Pignati has what seems to be a severe heart attack. This passage builds intrigue, leaving readers in the dark about the severity of Mr. Pignati's heart attack—or even whether he's survived the heart attack at all. It also demonstrates John and Lorraine's lingering immaturity and self-absorption—though they're far more considerate of others than they were at the start of the story, they still totally disregarded Mr. Pignati's age and health and the possibility that he could overextend himself by roller skating.

CHAPTER 11

John narrates this chapter. He immediately knows that Mr. Pignati has had a heart attack and calls an ambulance. When one "snotty cop" asks John who he and Lorraine are to Mr. Pignati, John quickly claims that they're his kids. He does his best to answer the rest of the authorities' questions, lying when he doesn't know an answer. But the police are "so dumb" that they have no idea he's lying.

John's poor attitude toward the police in this section follows his pattern of having an issue with authority figures. But in this context, it also reflects his troubled inner state: it seems that he's so worried about Mr. Pignati—and unable to fully process those feelings—that he misdirects those bad feelings outward, presenting them as animosity toward the police.

After the police leave, Lorraine yells at John for going up the stairs with roller skates on. John tells her she sounds like his Old Lady, but the remark clearly wounds Lorraine, and John immediately feels sorry for saying it. Though John could use a few beers to settle down, staying at Mr. Pignati's empty house makes John and Lorraine anxious, so they head out and take a walk through the **cemetery** instead.

In this passage, the cemetery is the elephant in the room, representing the difficult truth that John and Lorraine can't confront right now: the possibility that Mr. Pignati could die.

The next day, John and Lorraine cut class and go to St. Ambrose Hospital to visit Mr. Pignati. Lorraine looks ridiculous carrying a large bouquet of gladiolas. Much to their surprise, Mr. Pignati looks great—though John knows this is common among people who've had heart attacks, and it's very dangerous, as they can overexert themselves and have another heart attack and die. After the nurse who escorted John and Lorraine inside leaves, John says they had to pretend they were Mr. Pignati's kids to visit him, which seems to make Mr. Pignati happy. They engage in small talk for a time, though Lorraine remains distracted by the very elderly, very sick-looking man in the bed next to Pignati's.

John revealed at the very beginning of his and Lorraine's confession that Mr. Pignati died sometime before John and Lorraine began to write their confession. In light of this, John's remark here about the pattern of people suffering second, fatal heart attacks could foreshadow Mr. Pignati's eventual death. Lorraine is distracted by the man next to Mr. Pignati because in his sickly state he represents one outcome of Mr. Pignati's time in the hospital—that is, Mr. Pignati's health could deteriorate, and he could die. The man forces Lorraine to confront the ugly possibility of death, and she's not comfortable with this.

Mr. Pignati asks the teens if the house is okay, and Lorraine hurriedly retrieves the keys from her pocket to return to Mr. Pignati. Mr. Pignati insists that she and John keep the keys in case they want to hang around the house and watch TV. Lorraine tries to protest, but John cuts her off, glaring at her. Before they leave, Mr. Pignati asks the teens to stop by the zoo and say hi to Bobo, and they agree.

This scene further establishes John's and Lorraine's different personalities. Though John has grown far more considerate and thoughtful than he was at the start of the story, he's still quite selfish and mostly acts out of self-interest, seizing on Mr. Pignati's offer to hang out as his house without considering that this might be rude. At the same time, John's selfishness is somewhat understandable, as Mr. Pignati's house has become something of a safe haven for John—a place he can go to escape his unstable home life.

John and Lorraine leave the hospital, and John is excited to see the outside world. He hates hospitals and thinks that **cemeteries** would be better atmospheres for sick people to recover in. At this point, John addresses the audience, explaining that Lorraine blames him for everything that happens from here on out—and he thinks that she might be right to blame him.

John perhaps hates hospitals because they're filled with the threat of death, a fear that John finds difficult to push out of his mind under normal circumstances, much less in a place full of sick and potentially dying people. The cemetery, by contrast, is rather comforting in its certainty. Finally, this passage builds intrigue, leaving readers to wonder what John did to make Lorraine blame him for the events that follow (presumably alluding to Mr. Pignati's death).

Things start off okay—John finds some spaghetti sauce and vermicelli in the kitchen, so he "let[s] the little homemaker go ahead" and make them dinner. As she cooks, Lorraine talks about missing "him," and John asks who. Lorraine says John knows who she's talking about. Inwardly, John thinks it feels strange to be inside Mr. Pignati's house without Mr. Pignati.

This is another passage that hasn't aged all that well; John and Lorraine are supposed to be friends, which implies that they're equals, and yet John seems to expect Lorraine to perform the conventionally female, "homemaker" task of preparing dinner—and then he mocks her for it. This passage also further demonstrates John's inability to confront the possibility that Mr. Pignati could die—it seems that he's so scared of anything happening to Mr. Pignati that he can't even bring himself to speak Mr. Pignati's name aloud to Lorraine.

After a while, John goes upstairs. He pulls one of Mr. Pignati's old, shiny blue suits out of the closet. The suit is ridiculously big on John, but when he looks at himself in the mirror, he feels like a famous actor. To complete the look, he finds a makeup pencil and draws a moustache above his lip. When John returns to the kitchen, Lorraine tells him he looks great.

It seems that John has put on Mr. Pignati's suit to cheer himself and Lorraine up since they both miss Mr. Pignati. At the same time, though, it's rather inconsiderate of John to go through Mr. Pignati's things without his permission, and this demonstrates John's continued immaturity and disregard for others.

Lorraine flashes a mischievous smile and heads upstairs, telling John she'll be right back. Lorraine is upstairs for a long time, much to John's annoyance—he has to keep turning the burner on and off so that the sauce doesn't boil over and burn. But just when he's about to lose his cool, he hears Lorraine's sensuous voice coming from the stairs. John turns and sees Lorraine wearing one of Conchetta's old white dresses that has an exceedingly low neckline. John says Lorraine looks amazing. Then he grunts like Bobo and runs after her. Lorraine laughs and runs upstairs. She tells John to stop, running inside the bedroom and shutting the door behind her, trying to keep it shut. But John forces it open and runs inside.

This is yet another instance in which Lorraine goes along with something that John does—even though she might not agree with it. Given Lorraine's initial hesitance to accept Mr. Pignati's keys in the first place, it's unlikely she would've gone through Conchetta's things—a far more personal invasion of Mr. Pignati's privacy—if John hadn't prompted her to do so. Though Lorraine is usually more considerate of Mr. Pignati's feelings than John, she repeatedly lets John influence her behavior, and as a result she becomes just as complicit as John in disrespecting and possibly hurting Mr. Pignati.

Inside the bedroom, John and Lorraine are laughing hard. John demands one kiss. Lorraine tells John to stop and starts laughing. John "stop[s] it by putting [his] lips on hers." It's their first kiss, and they both realize they're no longer acting. After a pause, Lorraine says they should go back downstairs. John says okay. Downstairs, John pours them glasses of wine. They look at each other in silence, and then they finally toast, "To the Pigman."

Contemporary readers may find that this passage, too, hasn't aged well. Though Lorraine's feelings for John are rather ambiguous, here she clearly tells him to stop chasing her—and he forcibly kisses her anyway. The book doesn't seem to portray John's behavior as problematic, yet he clearly disregards her feelings to act on his own feelings, and that's not something that should happen in a healthy friendship or romantic relationship.

CHAPTER 12

Lorraine narrates this chapter. Back home, Lorraine's mother grumbles about a female patient she wishes would just die already, since the woman's husband has been behaving inappropriately toward Lorraine's mother. Lorraine walks into the bedroom and starts cleaning up, hoping it will get her mother to stop talking. She wonders how her mother would treat Mr. Pignati if he were her patient. Desperate to escape her mother's grumbling, Lorraine tells her she has to go to school now. Before Lorraine can leave, her mother assesses Lorraine's skirt, criticizing its shortness. She says that Lorraine doesn't have to think about sex all the time just because all the other girls are.

Lorraine's mother's lack of compassion for her dying patients really hits home for Lorraine in a way it hasn't before now that Mr. Pignati is sick, and Lorraine is faced with the possibility that Mr. Pignati, like her mother's patients, could die. Another negative thing Lorraine's mother does here is project her own unease about sexuality (a consequence of her late husband's infidelity) onto her daughter, who hasn't done anything wrong. The novel doesn't state this, but it's possible that Lorraine's mother's criticism is the reason that Lorraine is uncomfortable exploring her own sexuality, as demonstrated in the previous chapter with her and John's uneasy kiss.

At school that day, Lorraine doesn't meet up with John until third-period lunch. Lorraine notices that he looks sharper than usual, and she can tell he's still thrilled about having Mr. Pignati's house to themselves. During lunch, John drags Lorraine to a school pay phone and calls up Mr. Pignati at St. Ambrose Hospital. John hands the phone to Lorraine so he can keep watch—students aren't allowed to use the public phone. Eventually, a nurse picks up. She tells Lorraine that the earliest Mr. Pignati would be released would be Saturday. Lorraine hangs up the phone and passes along this information to John.

This passage further demonstrates the selfishness that continues to affect John's behavior despite his growing maturity. That he's dressing nicer than usual—presumably trying to look good around Lorraine after the romantic scene they shared in the previous chapter—suggests that his motive for accepting Mr. Pignati's keys was mostly selfish. He seems more interested in having a space to engage in future intimacy with Lorraine than, for instance, looking after Mr. Pignati's space while he recovers at the hospital.

John and Lorraine try to replicate their lovely Monday night—the night that was, to Lorraine, "the first time [she] was glad to be alive," though she knows that she and John looked decidedly silly in their respective costumes. But on Tuesday, Lorraine burns the TV dinners. And on Wednesday, she's too busy with chores to leave the house. On Thursday, John and Lorraine have to write a report for Problems in American Democracy and don't have time to go to Mr. Pignati's house.

Lorraine's describing Monday night as "the first time [she] was glad to be alive" reflects her happiness at her and John's shared kiss. That this happy moment happened while she and John were wearing the Pignatis' clothes symbolizes the positive effect Mr. Pignati has had on Lorraine's life. Being in his company makes her feel happy, safe, and accepted. Meanwhile, being at her mother's house, where she is constantly criticized and punished, does just the opposite.

That Friday—the day before Mr. Pignati is supposed to come home—John and Lorraine cut class and head over to Mr. Pignati's house first thing in the morning. Lorraine makes breakfast, making John the "scrambled eggs with Sloppy-Joe sauce" that he requests. She burns the toast, which John complains about. When she offers to make more, he complains that it'll take too long. Then he claims that Lorraine messed up the instant coffee, though it's virtually impossible to mess up instant coffee. After breakfast, Lorraine asks John to take out the garbage, but he refuses: "Why should I put out the garbage when you're the one who makes it?"

This is another aspect of the book that hasn't aged well. Though the book clearly means to portray John's ungratefulness in a negative light, it doesn't overtly challenge the assumption that Lorraine, as the female half of their partnership, is better suited to domestic tasks like cooking and cleaning. That being said, the book has already established that John acts out to cope with difficult feelings he doesn't know how to handle. Knowing this, readers can interpret the disrespect he shows Lorraine as a misdirected stress response to his worry for Mr. Pignati.

After breakfast, Lorraine wants to straighten up the house for Mr. Pignati's arrival. But John refuses to wash even his *own* dishes. John's horrid behavior makes Lorraine starts to empathize with John's mother. If Lorraine didn't know how "maladjusted" John can be, she'd have left straight away and never associated with him again—but instead, she lets him glower and watch TV.

A generous reading of John's horrible behavior is that he's overwhelmed and immobilized with fear that Mr. Pignati might die, or perhaps he's scared about how he should act around Lorraine following their kiss. On the other hand, a less generous reading is that he simply (and selfishly) doesn't want to help Lorraine do chores. Lorraine's attributing John's poor behavior to him being "maladjusted" is admirably compassionate, perhaps to a fault—regardless of whatever inner turmoil John is dealing with, he's also being self-absorbed and a bad, unsupportive friend.

Lorraine thinks that John's bad mood has been brewing ever since they first kissed; they've both been awkward around each other ever since that fateful evening. She thinks that maybe John has begun to think about their changing relationship. Lorraine, meanwhile, knows she's loved John for months. And though John initially seemed to consider her nothing more than a friend, Lorraine has noticed that he's started wearing shaving lotion and dressing nicer. Sometime later, John finally appears in the doorway and tells Lorraine that he'll take the garbage out—but only because Mr. Pignati will be back tomorrow.

It's unclear why Lorraine has any interest in this relationship—John repeatedly invalidates her emotions and manipulates her to get his way. But regardless of whether the reader finds Lorraine's love for John healthy or even believable, her emotions reaffirm the desirability of companionship, especially to alleviate one's loneliness. When John finally (albeit sulkily) offers to take the garbage out, it shows that he's gradually recognizing how immature he's been and is trying to find better, more responsible methods of working through difficult emotions.

After that, John and Lorraine dive into cleaning, not stopping until the place is spotless. The only room they don't touch is the room with all the **pigs** in it—Lorraine sees that room as "almost religious." She thinks it contains Mr. Pignati's "spirit."

This passage shows the respect and care the teens have for Mr. Pignati. They know how important his pig collection is to him, and so they leave the room in order to protect the pigs Mr. Pignati holds so dear.

Later that day, Lorraine has a nightmare about the room. In the dream, she walks down a long hall and sees curtains hanging from the doorway at the end of the hall. The **pig** room is dark, but Lorraine can discern the outlines of pigs before her. But the pigs aren't sitting on the table like they usually are—instead, they're arranged around a long, dark object. Lorraine feels a force overcome her, moving her fingers toward the long, dark object. She knows she's about to open it—the coffin. It's at that point that she wakes up screaming. In retrospect, Lorraine decides, it should have been obvious to her that "the dream was an omen of death."

Lorraine's bad dream further develops the pig symbolism while building intrigue. At this point, readers know that Mr. Pignati will die, but they don't know how. In placing what is presumably Mr. Pignati's coffin near the pigs, Lorraine's dream suggests that the pigs will have something to do with his death. In addition, the fact that Lorraine has a nightmare about death in the first place shows that she is anxious about death but lacks the knowledge and support to work through that anxiety in her waking life.

John calls out to Lorraine from the kitchen. Lorraine heads to the kitchen and sees lots of beers arranged on the kitchen table. John tells her they're going to have a party tonight—just a few people. Lorraine thinks the idea is unhinged, but John smiles at her and tells her it's what Mr. Pignati would want.

Immediately after (sort of) redeeming himself by taking the garbage out, John reverts to his selfish and inconsiderate ways. It's doubtful that John really thinks Mr. Pignati would want them to throw a party at his house—it's more likely that he wants to have a party himself, knows it's probably selfish of him to do this, and so develops this ridiculous argument to alleviate his guilt and justify his unwise actions.

CHAPTER 13

John narrates this chapter. He concedes that he really *did* think Mr. Pignati would want them to have fun with their friends. Dennis is the first guest to arrive that night, a bottle of his father's whiskey in hand. To John's relief, Dennis arrives alone—John had told Dennis not to invite Norton, not wanting the party to get too out of hand, and Dennis apparently listened to him. At first, Lorraine is apprehensive about using all of Mr. Pignati's food, but John tells her that Mr. Pignati bought it just for them anyway. And after a while, she gets over her apprehension and throws herself into preparing the hors d'oeuvres, placing ricotta cheese, frogs' legs, and fish killies on crackers.

It seems rather farfetched that John would believe that Mr. Pignati would want a bunch of high schoolers over at his house drinking and making a mess—more likely, John is using this logic in an attempt to assuage the guilt he feels in the party's aftermath. Thus, John's logic here shows his continued failure to take responsibility for his actions. Meanwhile, Lorraine's failure to stop John from throwing the party—even though she clearly thought it was a bad idea—is almost as bad.

Deanna Deas and her best friend Helen Kazinski arrive next. The girls are known as "Beauty and the Beast" around school, since Deanna is beautiful, and Helen is very overweight. Other peers arrive after them. Everyone is nice, but according to John, they all have "a problem all his own." Jen Appling, for example, is over six feet tall. Though John and Lorraine didn't want to have too many people over, they end up calling more and more people. Janice Dickery arrives sometime later—she's nice and dropped out of school junior year. John also invites Jack Brahn to the party, but he refuses to attend when he hears that Janice Dickery is there—Jack is the reason Janice dropped out.

This is another aspect of the book that contemporary readers may find hasn't aged well. While John's cruel description of Helen and Deanna is in line with John's rather unthinking, unempathetic personality, criticizing Helen's weight isn't all that necessary to furthering the plot or getting the book's important points across. The book never makes clear what exactly went on between Jack Brahn and Janice Dickery, but whatever happened, it highlights the book's central idea that people are dealing with all kinds of hardships, and so it's important to treat them with compassion and empathy—which seems not to have been the case for Janice, hence her dropping out.

The band arrives after eight. When they finish setting up and start to play, the party really gets started. In total, there are around 40 kids at the party. The food is gone in no time, even the frogs' legs and chocolate-covered ants. Melissa Dumas gets too drunk and starts to sing. John and Lorraine moved the furniture onto the patio, leaving room for an open dance floor in the living room. Janice Dickery starts to dance suggestively, which helps explain why she had to drop out of school. As the party gets more raucous, Lorraine tells John that the nuns across the street are going to call to complain. But John yells at her to shut up—he's still upset with her for telling him to take out the garbage earlier.

As the party gets more out of control, John's suggestion that Mr. Pignati would have wanted them to have a party becomes even less convincing. And John's selfishness further comes through here when he yells at Lorraine for her perfectly reasonable (not to mention responsible) concern that the party will disturb Mr. Pignati's neighbors. It's clear that the person John cares most about is himself, not Mr. Pignati or Lorraine.

Overall, John reflects, the party starts off great. People are having fun, and hardly anything's been damaged—just a spilled drink and a dropped cigarette burning a small hole in the throw rug. At 10:30, John throws on his roller skates and comes rolling onto the dance floor. Melissa Dumas puts on Lorraine's skates without asking, much to Lorraine's irritation.

John further demonstrates his carelessness when he pulls out his roller skates—the very thing that led to Mr. Pignati's heart attack. It's clear that John isn't all that mindful of the ways his poor behavior could escalate the situation once more—he just wants to have a good time and impress people with his antics, as he always has.

Norton arrives later, furious that he wasn't invited. When he confronts John about this, John lies that it was a mistake. Norton runs off after that. John keeps his eye on him, warily observing Norton standing off to the side, assessing the place for things to steal or break. Lorraine is initially worried when she sees Norton, but eventually she and Helen Kazinski head upstairs to change into Conchetta's clothing. The girls come back downstairs after a short while. Helen looks ridiculous, but John thinks that Lorraine looks as beautiful as she did Monday night. Lorraine, meanwhile, worriedly tells Helen not to rip Conchetta's dress, which is a bit snug on Helen.

Norton's arrival isn't a great sign—John and Lorraine have both stated how "disturbed" and even dangerous Norton is, Norton himself has threatened to intimidate or steal from Mr. Pignati, and now he's actively assessing Mr. Pignati's house to determine if there's anything worth stealing. In short, Norton's arrival all but guarantees that this party won't end well. This scene also paints Lorraine in a negative light. Though she, unlike John, seems to recognize the difference between right and wrong, responsible and irresponsible, she doesn't always act on it. Here, she dresses up in Conchetta's old clothing even though she knows it's irresponsible and could result in someone damaging the clothing.

By this point, the band is playing at full blast. John can't find Norton anywhere and worries what he's gotten up to. He yells at Lorraine, who is running around emptying ashtrays, if she's found Norton. She says he went upstairs. John runs upstairs, encountering Deanna Deas and Janice Dickery, who are dressed in Conchetta's clothes, on their way back downstairs. John is in a panic by this point, somehow knowing what he'll find upstairs. Sure enough, he finds Norton in a room upstairs, messing with Mr. Pignati's things. Norton, Mr. Pignati's oscilloscope in hand, smiles mischievously when he sees John. When John orders him to drop it, Norton tells John it's rude not to share with friends. Just then, Lorraine shouts for John, and John heads downstairs to see what she wants.

As readers have likely predicted, Norton has come to this party with bad intentions—he seems set on stealing or otherwise damaging Mr. Pignati's possessions. It's increasingly clear that John and Lorraine's decision to host this party will have devastating consequences and severely impact their relationship with Mr. Pignati. Whether they, and especially John, will be willing to accept responsibility for the damage—material and emotional—that the party will undoubtedly cause is another question.

Downstairs, a panicked Lorraine motions for John to look out the window—there's a taxi outside. John tries to convince himself that it can't be Mr. Pignati, but Lorraine shouts again that someone is walking up the stairs. Meanwhile, John hears the sound of things breaking coming from the **pig** room. He pushes aside the black curtains and finds Norton inside, smashing the pigs against the table. He sees broken pigs all over the floor. All John can think about is how happy Mr. Pignati looked when he first showed John and Lorraine the pigs. Overcome with rage, John pummels Norton, punching him square in the face. Norton fights back, and John flees.

It's notable that John reacts to Norton destroying the pigs by thinking about how happy the pigs made Mr. Pignati—not about the possibility of himself getting in trouble for the pigs being broken. In this moment, John is thinking about someone else's wellbeing rather than his own—albeit a little too late, as the pigs are already broken, and John can't do anything to stop the pain and hurt and betrayal Mr. Pignati will experience when he finds out.

As John runs from the **pig** room, he notices that the band has gone silent. Then John hears Lorraine cry out that the Pigman is back. John runs at Norton, pushing him to the floor before falling down himself. John sees blood gush from Norton's nose and feels momentarily happy. Then he lifts his head and sees Mr. Pignati standing above him—but Mr. Pignati doesn't look even a little bit happy. John passes out.

Mr. Pignati's unhappy expression confirms that in throwing the party, John and Lorraine have severely compromised their friendship with Mr. Pignati. They've betrayed his trust in a huge way, and whether they'll be able to get that trust back and repair their friendship remains to be seen. Given the pig collection's importance to Mr. Pignati, though, the possibility of either happening seems slim at best.

CHAPTER 14

Lorraine narrates this chapter. A police officer helps Lorraine get John into a police car. The officer tells Lorraine she and John are lucky that Mr. Pignati isn't going to press charges. She asks the officer if Mr. Pignati is okay. The last she saw of Mr. Pignati, he was carrying the dress of Conchetta's that Helen Kazinski had ripped, and Lorraine didn't know what to say to him. She begs the officer to let her see Mr. Pignati before they leave, but the officer says no and snaps that Mr. Pignati is crying. Hearing this, Lorraine starts to shake. She barks at John to wake up, but he doesn't rouse.

Up to this point, John and Lorraine have been a source of joy for Mr. Pignati—their company has cheered him up and made him forget his grief for Conchetta somewhat, or at least make his grief more manageable. Now, though, the teens are the cause of Mr. Pignati's tears. In this passage, Lorraine seems to recognize the hard truth that all her actions have consequences—even if she didn't mean any harm.

During the ride home in the police car, Lorraine fears what Lorraine's mother will say when she sees Lorraine dressed in Conchetta's white dress—Lorraine couldn't find her own clothes. One of the police officers asks if it's their idea of fun to terrorize old people. Lorraine begs the officer to just let them go, but he insists on speaking with Lorraine's family. John momentarily rouses, drunkenly laughing before falling back asleep. Lorraine tells the officer that her mother will beat her, and she says she should've thought about that before ruining Mr. Pignati's house.

Though Lorraine has always been more compassionate than John, this passage shows that there are limits to her compassion. Here, she rather selfishly seems more preoccupied with how her action of taking Conchetta's dress will affect her (whether it will cause her mother to punish her)—not how it's affected Mr. Pignati.

When the car pulls up outside Lorraine's house, Lorraine's mother steps outside and asks Lorraine where her clothes are. The officer fills Lorraine's mother in on the night's events, and then Lorraine's mother slaps Lorraine on the face. Lorraine shrieks, and the police officer almost looks sorry that he brought Lorraine home. Lorraine's mother orders her inside. Lorraine has barely changed out of her dress when her mother comes inside, a disgusted look on her face. Lorraine says she didn't do anything wrong. She wants to tell her mother about the whole story, about how she has no friends and is so lonely. But then Lorraine's mother runs up to her and hits her again. She tells Lorraine that Lorraine lied to her.

It's understandable that Lorraine's mother is upset with Lorraine for lying to her face. But being upset isn't an excuse to hit someone, especially a child. Lorraine's mother's choice to take out her own bad feelings on Lorraine through corporal punishment suggests that while personal responsibility and compassion for others are often markers of maturity, it's not guaranteed that everyone will gain these traits with age. Instead, a person has to acknowledge the value in these traits and choose to adopt them, which Lorraine's mother seems not to have done. Otherwise, she might be more understanding of Lorraine's poor behavior (or at least able to deal with her anger in a way that doesn't harm Lorraine).

Then Lorraine's mother breaks down crying, and Lorraine knows she's supposed to apologize to her—but for the first time in her life, she doesn't want to. Mr. Pignati is the only person Lorraine wants to apologize to. But then she remembers the times she's woken up in the middle of the night and found her mother crying at the kitchen table. So instead, she goes to her mother and hugs her. She tells Lorraine about her and John's friendship with Mr. Pignati, leaving out certain bits here and there.

Lorraine is forced to be the adult in this situation, setting aside her own hurt feelings to comfort her mother, who is unable to set aside her own hurt feelings to deal with Lorraine in a compassionate, fair way. Lorraine's behavior is commendable, but it also illustrates how living with an unsupportive, often cruel parent has forced Lorraine to grow up quicker than she should have to.

Eventually, Lorraine and Lorraine's mother get ready to go to bed, and Lorraine even feels a little better. But just then, Lorraine's mom asks if Mr. Pignati ever tried anything "sexually" with Lorraine. She says that old men can do that in ways that Lorraine might not have caught on to. Lorraine, disgusted, says no. She tells her mother good night, knowing that she'll never understand what Lorraine and John had with Mr. Pignati.

Contemporary readers might not find Lorraine's mother's concern as disgusting as Lorraine does—after all, it's hardly appropriate for an old man to invite underage students to his house and give them wine. With that being said, Lorraine's anger stems from the fact that her mother is continuing to project her personal distrust of men onto Mr. Pignati, who has been a support rather than a menace to Lorraine over the past months.

In her room that night, Lorraine cries. She wonders if Mr. Pignati will think that she and John destroyed the **pigs** and Conchetta's clothes on purpose. "We were just playing," she thinks. And then she can't get the word—"playing"—out of her mind. She remembers a time she saw a cat playing with a ball as though it were stalking it. Eventually, the cat sunk its teeth into the ball "as if it were a living thing." She thought, then, "Play was something so natural, […] something which Nature wanted us to do to prepare us for later life." Then Lorraine's thoughts flash back to the night she and John kissed in Mr. Pignati's bedroom.

Lorraine realizes that even if she and John didn't intend to hurt Mr. Pignati, they have to take responsibility for the unintentional hurt they inflicted on him by hosting a party at his house that culminated in the destruction of his most prized possessions. "Playing" is something that children do, and so it's not acceptable for Lorraine, now on the verge of adulthood, to use this as an excuse. When Lorraine's thoughts flash back to her and John's first kiss, it's her desperate attempt to return to a happier time. As well, it shows that she sees herself as an adult (kissing is something that mature young adults, not children, do) who must take responsibility for her actions.

Lorraine eventually drifts off to sleep. She wakes up to Lorraine's mother standing over her. After a pause, Lorraine's mother asks if Lorraine had to "do anything bad" for the nylon stockings she got her. "No, Mother," Lorraine groans, wondering how long her mother had been worrying about this. Eventually, Lorraine's mother leaves for work.

Again, Lorraine's mother's concern isn't unwarranted, and it could even be an encouraging sign that Lorraine's mother is more concerned about Lorraine's wellbeing than angry at Lorraine for lying to her—it shows that Lorraine's mother is willing to set aside her anger to protect her daughter. But Lorraine (and seemingly the book) doesn't see things this way—instead, Lorraine's mother's concern is just another way that she fails to understand Lorraine and take interest in the things (and people) that matter to Lorraine, in this case Lorraine's friendship with Mr. Pignati.

John calls around 11:00 that morning, and he and Lorraine arrange to meet at the corner. When they meet up, John looks awful. He says Bore told him he had to go to a psychiatrist. Lorraine reminds him that Bore will probably forget about the psychiatrist, and John agrees. Then they walk toward Tony's Market so John can buy some cigarettes. They pass Josephine Adamo on their way there, and she calls out to them, "Some party!" Josephine, Lorraine remembers, left before the fight started.

This section reaffirms the lack of support John receives from his family; they neither punish John for his misguided actions nor care to get to the bottom of why John acts this way (which a psychiatrist perhaps could do). The interaction with Josephine also underscores just how much John and Lorraine's relationship with Mr. Pignati has changed them; they're no longer as carefree and self-absorbed as peers like Josephine. Instead, they're forced to reckon with the consequences of their carefree, selfish behavior, specifically how it's damaged their relationship with Mr. Pignati.

Lorraine asks John what happened when the police brought him home. John says John's mother began to frantically clean up the snow that John had tracked inside. But it was Bore's reaction that really upset John—he didn't even look angry, just "sick and old," and he didn't say a word. After a pause, John asks if Mr. Pignati was okay. Lorraine asks, "Why do you care?" John sheepishly looks away.

John's comment about Bore looking "sick and old" suggests John's growing compassion and introspection. It's of course unfair that John's parents continually fail to give him the support and stability he needs to mature into a well-adjusted adult, but John probably hasn't been as understanding of the inner struggles that prevent his parents from giving him that support (they're "sick and old" and don't know how to help him) as Lorraine is of her mother's struggles. Here, however, it seems that he finally recognizes that his parents are humans trying to navigate life and that they too deserve some compassion.

Eventually, John and Lorraine reach a phone booth and dial Mr. Pignati's number. He picks up. When he hears John's voice, he doesn't say anything. John says that he and Lorraine are horribly sorry and promises that they'll pay for everything (much to Lorraine's shock). But Mr. Pignati, in a weak, sad voice, says it okay—he's already cleaned up most of the mess. John asks if Mr. Pignati would like to meet them at the zoo to see Bobo. After a pause, Mr. Pignati agrees, though he still sounds sad.

John's offer to pay for the damage his and Lorraine's party caused demonstrates John's personal growth. Not only is he capable of taking responsibility for his actions, but he does so unprompted. Further illustrating John's maturity is his suggestion to go to the zoo. Before, John only reluctantly went along with things he didn't personally want to do, and now he suggests going to the zoo because he knows that it's something Mr. Pignati enjoys.

John and Lorraine arrive at the zoo a little after noon. They wait on the same bench that they sat on the first time they met Mr. Pignati at the zoo. They wait for over half an hour, and Lorraine fears that Mr. Pignati won't be coming after all, but eventually they see him roll up in a taxi. John says hi and shows Mr. Pignati the peanuts they bought for Bobo. Lorraine figures that Mr. Pignati has forgiven them for what they did, or else he wouldn't have agreed to meet them at the zoo—but he still looks so sad and sick. Mr. Pignati tries to pay John back for the peanuts, but John refuses. The three of them hop inside the zoo train and travel to the primate house. All the animals they pass on their way there look frozen and sad.

John and Lorraine's choice to sit on the same bench where they sat the first time they met Mr. Pignati at the zoo symbolizes their longing to repair the damage they've done to their friendship with him: they want to return to a time before they betrayed him. But it's a vital part of growing up not only to accept responsibility for one's actions, but also to accept that not all of those actions have solutions. Though the teens long to redeem themselves in Mr. Pignati's eyes, the reality is that that might not be possible.

When they arrive at the primate house, John helps Mr. Pignati out of the train car. Mr. Pignati smiles and thanks John. Lorraine says that Bobo will be happy to see Mr. Pignati, trying to cheer up the sickly man. But when they get inside, Bobo is nowhere in sight. Worried, Mr. Pignati calls out for Bobo, but Bobo doesn't appear. An attendant walks up to them and says that Bobo died last week—he had pneumonia. Mr. Pignati stares into the cage and doesn't say a word. John and Lorraine have no idea what to do. John and Lorraine take Mr. Pignati's arms and try to guide him out of the primate house. Suddenly, Mr. Pignati cries out as his hand reaches for the railing. He misses and falls to the floor, dead.

Finally, the novel reveals the details of Mr. Pignati's death, which it has only alluded to up to this point. The shock of Bobo's death is the latest in a series of setbacks that have placed undue stress on Mr. Pignati's mind and body. Unable to deal with the hurt of Conchetta's death, John and Lorraine's betrayal, and now the death of his "best friend," Mr. Pignati's body gives out, and he dies. With this, John and Lorraine learn a brutal, difficult lesson: their actions have consequences (though of course Mr. Pignati's death is only an indirect consequence of their act of betrayal), some of which they'll have to live with for the rest of their lives.

CHAPTER 15

John narrates this chapter. He barks at the attendant to call an ambulance. Then John tells Lorraine she'd better leave, knowing Lorraine's mother will be furious if she knows Lorraine met up with Mr. Pignati that day. Lorraine starts to cry and runs out of the primate house. After a while, it's just John there, kneeling beside Mr. Pignati. The monkeys stop shrieking, and the monkey house is suddenly silent. John doesn't feel a pulse in Mr. Pignati's wrist.

John's development from self-absorbed and unempathetic to thoughtful and compassionate really comes through in his choice to deal with the first responders to protect Lorraine. It shows that he now recognizes the importance of sometimes doing unpleasant things to help the people one cares about.

John remembers when he asked Lorraine about Mr. Pignati earlier that day, and Lorraine said, "What do you care?" John realizes he *does* care about Mr. Pignati. Lorraine thinks she knows everything about John. But she doesn't. He wonders what Lorraine wants from him—to tell her everything that matters to him? That he feels lonely and friendless too? That it pains him to live in a world where you can grow old and only have a baboon for company?

Not only is John more compassionate than he was at the start of the story, but he's more introspective now, too. Before, he would resort to self-destructive behaviors like drinking and smoking to avoid dealing with his loneliness, but now he's more comfortable with acknowledging the inner hardships that plague him.

John wonders if he and Lorraine are themselves just "big blabbing baboons—smiling away and not really caring what was going on as long as there were enough peanuts bouncing around." Suddenly, the monkey house's tile floor feels cold against John's knees. He stands and looks down at Mr. Pignati's corpse. In that moment, the old man's head looks a little like Bore's, which bothers John.

John's observation that he and Lorraine are "big blabbing baboons" suggests that the teens are selfish, mostly caring about things that affect them personally and perhaps not caring as much about problems that affect others. When John thinks that Mr. Pignati's head looks like Bore's, it shows that he's finally realizing that his parents will die—and that he's not ready for that to happen.

John lights a cigarette and watches the smoke float up to the ceiling. He wonders if Lorraine is outside waiting for him. He feels like he's in Lorraine's nightmare, the one about the room with the black curtains. He thinks about the fact that he, too, will end up in a coffin someday. Then he hears Lorraine's voice inside his head, scolding him for smoking cigarettes. He wonders if he'd rather die than grow up into one of the adults he hates—the adults who think he's disturbed just because he thinks about serious things like "God and death and the Universe and Love."

While John is more introspective than he was at the beginning of the story, it's still difficult for him to acknowledge the tough issues that plague him, like Mr. Pignati's death and his and Lorraine's betrayal of Mr. Pignati. Still, when John explains here that what he hates most about adults is that they don't want to talk about serious issues, it shows that he's learned that keeping these things bottled up inside isn't a solution. Adults might think John is disturbed for thinking about serious things, but what's actually disturbed, John implies here, is thinking that ignoring one's hardships will make them go away.

John stays in the monkey house until the ambulance arrives and announces Mr. Pignati's death. Then he says goodbye and walks outside, finding Lorraine sitting on a nearby bench. When she sees John, she screams that they "murdered him." John doesn't respond. Instead, he sits down beside Lorraine and lights another cigarette to distract him from the nearby ambulance's flashing lights.

Lorraine's suggestion that she and John "murdered" Mr. Pignati is exaggerated—though their recent actions might have contributed to Mr. Pignati's stress, they aren't directly responsible for his heart attack. Nonetheless, Lorraine's belief demonstrates her ability to accept personal responsibility, a trait that has developed in both teens over the course of the novel.

Elsewhere, John sees a large man in a uniform carrying a bunch of helium balloons. Lorraine watches the man pass by and then bursts into tears. Finally, John gently tells Lorraine it's time to go. He offers her her sunglasses, and Lorraine takes them. She cautiously offers her hand to John, and he takes it. They look at each other but don't speak.

For much of the book, John has mocked or invalidated Lorraine's feelings, but when he takes her hand in this scene, it shows that he's learned to be less selfish and more compassionate toward her.

John realizes that their only crime was that they'd "trespassed." They'd "been where they didn't belong, and [they] were being punished for it." They can no longer blame anyone—not their parents, not Norton—for what's happened. They have only themselves to blame for anything that happens in their lives. "[Baboons] build their own cages," John imagines Mr. Pignati whispering to John and Lorraine "as he took his children with him."

When John muses that Mr. Pignati "took his children with him," he means that part of John and Lorraine died with Mr. Pignati—that is, his death has changed them in a deep, permanent way. They've learned—in the hardest way imaginable—that all their actions have consequences.

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