

Among the Free Study Guide

Among the Free by Margaret Peterson Haddix

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Plot Summary

Among the Free is the final book in the Shadow Children series by Margaret Peterson Haddix. Margaret Peterson Haddix is an award-winning author who has received honors from the International Reading Association Children's Book Award and Quick Pick for Reluctant Youth Adult Readers citations. She has also made the list of fifteen state award finalist lists.

In this novel, Luke Garner, is a 13-year-old boy. Luke is a third child for his parents, which also means that his existence is illegal according to the Population Police and the government that rules Luke's country. The Population Police is responsible for enforcing the law, which is that families are only permitted to have two children. Third children are executed by the Population Police. The reason the law came about is because a drought and a famine spread across the country before Luke was even born.

Luke Garner is the main character of the novel. The story is about Luke's life. When the novel opens, Luke is working undercover for the Population Police. Luke and his friends, primarily other third children and people who don't agree with the law, have a plan to sabotage the government from the inside. Luke is a stablehand, responsible for taking care of the horses that the Population Police ride in their free time when he is chosen as a messenger to work with the police. As a messenger, Luke is responsible for going to villages and telling the residents to meet in the town square to receive their new identification cards. The first house Luke comes to, the old woman refuses to go, which leads to the policeman ordering Luke to shoot her. When Luke refuses, throws the gun down and runs away, the rest of the novel is about his journey away from the old ways of life and running toward a new way of life - a life of freedom and choice.

As the story unfolds, the readers learn about Luke's past and the past of his family members and friends. The reader also learn about the culture and laws of the country along Luke's journey, through present stories and the stories of Luke's past, and what led him on this journey.

As the various customs unfold, a clash exists between the old ways and the ways people want the culture of modern times to be. The culture clashes between old and modern times especially reveal themselves when Luke returns to Population Police Headquarters after the government is overthrown. This is when Luke realizes that the only way to make things change is to stand up for his rights and to get the people to understand their own rights.

The novel describes the trials and tribulations Luke goes through as she tries to find her place in life. Luke switches back and forth, as to whether he wants to remain in hiding or speak up for his right of freedom. In the end, Luke decides to speak up for his rights of freedom, which also leads to the freedom of all the people in the country, especially third children.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

In Chapter 1, Luke Garner is standing in line with the other stablehands at Population Police headquarters. The boys are undergoing their daily inspection of their uniforms and hygiene at 6:30 in the morning. While the sergeant is the inspector, this morning he also has a man in uniform with a row of medals on his chest. The man with the medals is picking three boys for what the sergeant refers to as a "higher purpose" and a better way to serve their country. The man with the medals picks the tallest boy, the most muscular boy, and Luke.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Population Police Headquarters suggests that Luke and the other boys live in a world where adult couples are only allowed to have a specific number of children. If the number of children exceeds the allotted amount, it seems as if the government puts these children to work, such as a stablehands like Luke is.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

In Chapter 2, Luke and the other two boys chosen by the man with the medals on his chest are riding away from Population Police Headquarters in a van. Luke wants to gather his few belongings and tell his friends goodbye, but he doesn't get the chance before he is whisked away in the van. When the van stops, the boys emerge from the van and are assigned in pairs to report to different officers. The boys walk through the mud that is everywhere to get to the jeep with their assigned officer. As the officer signs out the jeep using the walkie-talkie, Luke remembers hiding on his family's farm until the government discovered his existence when he was 12 years old. The officer passes two pieces of cornbread to the two boys in his backseat, but the other boy eats Luke's piece. Officer Houk explains they are going to the town of Chiutza to knock on each door to summon the residents for a town meeting where they will be issuing everyone new ID cards.

Chapter 2 Analysis

It seems as if Luke's life before coming to work at Population Police Headquarters is a secret. From Luke's memories, it seems as if Luke was part of a rebellion with his friends to fight against the Population Police. Losing the battle seems to have landed look as a slave to the Population Police and the government of the country. The issuing of new ID cards suggests that the government is cracking down on the violators of the population rule by issuing ID cards that help the government to better track everyone.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

In Chapter 3, Luke thinks about one of the riskiest plans he and his friends embarked upon to win over the government. Luke's friend, Nina, who worked in the kitchen, brings out a pile of food to the stable. Luke's job is to place a huge pile of horse manure on the path the security officer takes to repair a broken fence. When the jeep arrives in Chiutza, the officer assigns each boy and the driver a street to tell the residents to be in the town square by 11 p.m. The town is falling apart. The first house Luke goes to, he has to knock down the door to deliver the news to an old woman who refuses to go to the meeting.

Chapter 3 Analysis

While Luke didn't hear anything more about I.D.s at the time, he comes to the conclusion that their plan must have worked if they are issuing new I.D.s to get in and out of the security gate. It seems as if the Population Police made promises to the residents of the country that the organization has not held up on their end, which is causing some of the residents to rebel.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

In Chapter 4, Officer Houk tells Luke to pick the old woman up and take her to the town square where he can shoot the woman to teach the others a lesson. When Luke picks up the old woman and carries her outside of a house, a crowd starts to gather, so the officer tells Luke to drop the woman there. Officer Houk tells the crowd the woman is guilty of treason. As he raises his gun to shoot her, the driver of the jeeps runs over with the radio for Officer Houk to listen to, which is calling for all backup to another area because of resistance there. Officer Houk instructs Luke to shoot the old woman. Luke drops the gun and runs away.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Luke thinks about what the old woman said about having a choice. This makes Luke realize he has a choice too. He originally joined the Population Police so that he and his friends could bring down the organization from within. Now, Luke has the choice to kill the old woman or not.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

In Chapter 5, Luke runs as he hears shooting behind him. Luke runs until he falls down out of breath. By this time, Luke has reached the woods that surround the town. Luke is familiar with woods because the woods his family owned protected him from the outside world when he was living at home with his family. Luke tries to find sticks and branches to make a shelter, but the wood is either too big or too small. Luke continues until he comes to a mountain. He finds an opening in the mountain—a cave that he goes into for shelter. As Luke falls asleep, he hears gunfire again.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Luke running away from the Population Police officer foreshadows a life on the run as a fugitive. It suggests that the remainder of the novel will be about Luke trying to survive out in the world on his own. Simultaneously, Luke must learn how to dodge the officers so he's not killed for the crime of treason.

The woods Luke runs into are a symbol of protection for Luke. The woods on his family farm is what separated the farm from the rest of the world. This shield allowed Luke to play outside without having to hide his existence while on the farm. Ironically, it is the woods, or what's in the woods that is a refuge for Luke once again as he hides from the Population Police.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

In Chapter 6, while Luke sits in his cave, he can hear dozens of gunfire, indicating to him that war has broken out. Luke decides to get closer to see what is going on. When the gunfire stops, he hears a group of people celebrating that they showed them, but Luke doesn't know what side the people are on. Luke finds his way back to the town of Chiutza and finds everyone back in their houses. He sees one cloaked figure in the darkness. Then, someone puts their hand over his mouth telling Luke to be quiet or they'll both get killed.

Chapter 6 Analysis

It's Luke's memory of his friend Jen getting him to stand up for his rights that also propels Luke out of the cave. Jen's encouraging words in his head is what gives Luke the courage to leave his cave to find out what's going on. The person who takes a hold of Luke appears to be on Luke's side, which is against the government, even though Luke is portraying himself as being on the government's side. This person might become Luke's partner in crime on Luke's journey of being a fugitive.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

In Chapter 7, the boy who grabs Luke is the boy who was assigned to work with him under Officer Houk. The boy says the driver left him behind when the villagers shot Officer Houk. The boy tells Luke that this is his territory now and that Luke has to go. Luke presses the boy for information and the boy takes him to a shed he is turning into his shelter. Behind the shed is sacks of grain, which the boys eat. Luke threatens to tell the villagers whom he is if the boy doesn't tell Luke what happened.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The boy could be setting Luke up. While the boy is trying to act tough and brave, he is really frightened and scared. If Luke can break through to the boy, they might be able to work together while they are both on the run. Working together will help them to better protect themselves and increase their chances of survival.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

In Chapter 8, the boy explains to Luke what happened. He says when he came around the corner to get a new street assignment from Officer Hook, he saw Luke holding the gun on the old woman and then throwing it down and running. After that, the villagers picked up the gun and shot Officer Houk. The villagers fought off the other officers and are in a house having a party now. The boy tells Luke he is on the side that feeds him.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The boy with Luke might prove to be a problem. Since his loyalties lie with whoever gives him food, he could turn Luke in for a reward or to save himself. On the other hand, the boy has street smarts that Luke does not possess. Sticking together, the boys can put both of their smarts together and help each other. The boy suggests that the Population Police are no longer in control and that the people of the country have taken back their rights.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

In Chapter 9, Luke leaves the shed after receiving the information, just as he promised the boy. He walks to the woods and turns his shirt inside out. He watches as the boy walks to the house where the party is. He reaches his hand through a window that has plastic and cardboard covering it. The boy screams and a horde of men come out and threaten to shoot him. The boy claims he's the one that saved the old woman's life, but when one of the men aims the gun to shoot, Luke calls out to save his life. The man shoots towards the woods where Luke is.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Luke has a foreboding feeling as he walks away from the shed and back toward the woods. It is because he realizes for the first time in his life that he is alone. Solitude and independence might be good for Luke since he lived a sheltered life when he was hiding from the Population Police by living in his parents' attic before he got his fake ID, enrolled in school and joined the Population Police.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

In Chapter 10, Luke runs from the shooting back into the woods. He runs as far as he can before looking back to see if anyone is close to him. Nobody is directly behind him. Luke finds a cave, but doesn't know if it's the same cave he found before. Tomorrow, he vows to find food.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Luke has an inner struggle as to why he risked his own life to save the boy's life. He also questions the price of freedom. Luke wonders if freedom means he has to be selfish or selfless.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

In Chapter 11, Luke spends the night in the cave. He has nightmares about ghosts, shooting and the old woman staring at him. Luke also convinces himself it is the same cave from the previous day because he can still hear Jen's voice encouraging him to get up and do something. The next morning, Luke stands up and bangs his head on a rock. He tries to decide where to go when he decides to walk away from the town. When he reaches a stream, he drinks from the water. Then, he sees a soybean crop that he eats from when he sees a truck.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Luke convinces himself that he can lead a normal life no matter who is in power—the Population Police or the residents of the country. It is Jen's voice ringing in his head, and the fact that he lived a normal life for the first 12 years of his life, that propels him toward finding freedom. As he walks away from the town, it's as if breadcrumbs are leading him along the right path. First, he finds water, then food and then transportation out of where he is and to take him where he wants to go.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

In Chapter 12, Luke gets on the ground to hide. He hears someone yell at the truck to get off the road. When the truck driver yells back that he is on official Population Police business, there is gunfire and the blaring sound of the truck horn as if the driver has slumped onto it. The rebels then scavenge the truck to find it full of food. Luke continues to walk in the same direction until he reaches an abandoned village. He goes into one of the houses to see if he can find food, but the cupboards are bare. Then, Luke hears voices.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Luke is having an inner struggle about who is in power and what that means for him and the rest of the country. For example, when the truck driver for the Population Police food truck is shot, Luke wonders if he is for the cause or just working so he and his family has food. In other words, Luke is struggling with good and evil because he is so innocent that until about one year ago he was living a very sheltered life.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

In Chapter 13, the two voices Luke hears are Population Police searching the village for residents. Luke escapes from a hole in the house and one of the policemen yells for him to stop as Luke runs towards the woods. Luke collapses and starts to lose consciousness, he looks up to see a circle of people above him. They pour a liquid down his throat and Luke comes back to life. They ask if he is wearing a Population Police uniform and Luke tells the truth. When the Population Police come to ask these people for their identification papers, they deny the police access to the information.

Chapter 13 Analysis

One by one the villages and towns across the country are standing up against the Population Police. It seems as if people realize now that what the Population Police promised them is not happening. When Luke tells the people he escaped from the police because they wanted him to kill someone and he wouldn't, it drives home the point that what the police are asking people to do is immoral and the people are getting nothing in return—not even the food they were promised.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

In Chapter 14, the people of the village stand in a line of solidarity against the Population Police. When the police try to bully the townspeople, the people say there are only two of the police but many of them. When the police try to get the people to hand over Luke, they say no. the police leave.

Chapter 14 Analysis

When Luke looks at the people with clear eyes, he realizes they are starving to death. The people know that they are going to die either way. They feel as if they would rather die free than die under the suppression of the Population Police. In addition, Luke thinks the people protect him out of unselfishness, but they tell him that he is one of them now and what they will not sacrifice is their freedom and their pride for a group of people that do not keep their promises.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

In Chapter 15, Luke and the people eat in celebration of their independence. Their food is only hard bread and broth. They say the ruins Luke ran from were their old homes. The Population Police made them move because the village was too far from the water line. The police made them grow corn and then soybeans but they had to give everything back to the government. The people only received food if they met their quota and they never did. Then they tell Luke all the names of the villagers they lost to the Population Police.

Chapter 15 Analysis

The people of the village were naïve in believing what the government told them to do. They no longer wish to listen to what the government officials say because they are on the losing end of the deal either way. They give Luke more food than the others because they believe he still has a chance to live. The villagers see Luke as a symbol of hope for the new world they will live in when the people take back the power from the Population Police.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

In Chapter 16, Eli, the old man villager, gives Luke a pillow and threadbare quilt to make a bed. As Luke is trying to fall asleep, he gets up and looks out the window. He sees a line of headlights heading toward the village. He recognizes it as the Population Police. Luke tries to wake Eli and his wife Adriana and get them to run. Eli tells Luke that they won't run but he should and take their stuff with him. Eli confesses that they used to turn in people with third children to receive food in return. They feel guilty for this now and feel that they deserve their fate. As Luke runs into the woods, he hears someone behind him yelling at him to stop.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Luke struggles with good and evil once again. He sees the acts of Eli, Adriana and the other villagers as acts of kindness. They saved him from the Population Police. They are in fact sacrificing their own lives for him. Then, Luke finds out that they once weren't quite so innocent by turning in their neighbors that broke the law in exchange for food. Luke, however, believes they have redeemed themselves by saving him.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

In Chapter 17, Lukje spends the night in the woods. When he wakes up, he realizes that his camp is up against a hill so the leaves blew over him during the night to camouflage him from his enemies. Luke wanders all day. When he is so parched he can't stand it anymore, he finds a house with a bucket of water hanging in the back yard. When Luke reaches for the bucket, it clangs to the ground but nobody comes, so Luke thinks the village is another abandoned one. Then, a hand clamps his wrists and a voice asks him why he isn't inside watching like everyone else.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Luke is struggling to separate reality from fiction. He thinks he sees ghosts as he runs through the woods. He also believes that someone is calling his real name, which is Luke. It seems as if the villagers might be calling his name so he can come back to the village because it's not the Population Police that came, but rather the rebels driving their trucks to spread the word that the Population Police are out of power. The question the man asks Luke foreshadows the falling of the power of the Population Police.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

In Chapter 18, the voice gives Luke a drink and when Luke looks up, he sees it is a boy about his own age. When the boy finds out Luke doesn't know what's going on, he drags him into a house where a crowd of people are sitting in front of the TV. The newscasters are a boy and girl about Luke's age and they are reporting that there was a peaceful overthrowing of the government. The people took the power back from the Population Police. The people are cheering in front of the police headquarters building, where they have raided the food supply. Luke says he has to see this for himself. The boy, who is Ricky Everts, and his father Don agree with Luke and they all head out to police headquarters.

Chapter 18 Analysis

For his entire life, Luke has been struggling with freedom. The one constant in his life is that he knew who was in power. Luke also knew that the people in power were his enemies as a third child. Now, Luke doesn't know who is in power. The unknown scares Luke and excites him at the same time.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

In Chapter 19, Don pulls his truck out of the garage and people crowd into the cab and the bed of the truck. At the last minute, Don's wife also decides to go. As the crowd drives in the drive, a newscaster comes on the radio that used to speak against the Population Police, and went into hiding when they came to power. He describes how many small events across the country led to the overthrowing of the government. Two of the major events are ones Luke was involved in—putting manure on the path so Jen could destroy the old identity cards and refusing to kill the old woman in Chiutza, which gave the rebels access to the gun.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Luke is continuing to have an identity crisis. He is afraid because he doesn't want the people he is with to find out that he has a Population Police shirt on and that he used to be one of them. He wonders if they would believe him if he told them he was the person in Chiutza the news report was talking about and the group of people that destroyed the original I.D.s. He also wonders if he is still illegal as a third child.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

In Chapter 20, the truck full of people arrives at Population Police headquarters. The crowd is still thick and there is bottleneck at the gate entrance because the girl newscaster is asking people to record their experiences with the Population Police. When Luke gets to the gate, he tells her he has the freedom not to talk.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Luke is struggling with where his home is now and who he is as a person. He is somewhat paranoid because he doesn't know what is to live a free life. The first time he is able to exercise his freedom is the freedom of speech, which he exercises when he decides not to tell his own story to be included on video as part of the history archive. Luke is also suspicious of Don's wife, which is another sign of paranoia.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

In Chapter 21, as Luke makes his way through the crowd in front of the Population Police headquarters, he sees people dancing, celebrating and eating the food from the building. Luke wonders if he will see anyone he knows, but doesn't recognize anyone as he makes his way under an isolated tree, away from all of the chaos. He realizes he is by the horse stables and goes in to check on his horse, Jenny. He sees that none of the horses have been fed since the Population Police deserted the area the day before. He tries to free Jenny from her stall, but she just pushes her feed trough to Luke. Luke spends hours cleaning out the horse stalls and feeding the two dozen horses. Then, he falls asleep in Jenny's stall.

Chapter 21 Analysis

The horse stable represents a safe haven or place of refuge for Luke. It is something familiar to him since he worked in the stables when he enlisted in the Population Police. Luke always felt as if Jenny was sympathizing with his situation, so he feels like he belongs when he returns to the stables. With so many unknowns in his life right now, the stable is the one place where Luke feels at home and as if he belongs and has a purpose in life.

Jenny and Luke live parallel lives. Jenny is not used to freedom, so she doesn't know what to do with it when Luke tries to set her free. What Jenny does know is that she is hungry and that Luke is typically the hand that feeds her. Neither Jenny nor Luke know where to go now that they are both free, so they both settle in to the familiar, to what they know, which is the routine of the stable.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

In Chapter 22, Luke wakes up in Jenny's stall the next morning. He feeds the horses again and then realizes he needs food too. He uses the water pump to clean his hands, face and hair. He changes into a long sleeve shirt that the Population Police left behind. It doesn't have an insignia on it though. He makes his way to the building where the food is and just finds fruit on the counter. Luke goes into the kitchen to see if his friend Nina is there, but of course, she is gone. Luke makes his own breakfast of scrambled eggs and sits in the dining room to watch the TV news coverage. The newscaster, Philip Twinings says they have found the one person responsible for the coup and Luke recognizes the person.

Chapter 22 Analysis

Luke continues to fear leaving the safety of the horse stable, but he knows it's what he has to do, and what Jen would want him to do. Thoughts continue to swirl in his mind, which create a debate in his head. For example, when he sees the sleeping bodies strewn throughout the law, he looks to see if they're breathing, which they are. Luke wonders how long he will continue to think about the Population Police coming back and trying to regain power.

Luke also mentions that the cold weather seems to be gone and spring seems to have arrived overnight. Spring represents a new beginning. With the tyrants out of power, it is a new beginning for all of the people that live in the country.

When Luke recognizes the person taking responsibility for the coup, it infers that it is the boy he left behind in Chiutza. Just as the boy told him he would do, he is taking responsibility for turning the gun over to the villagers so that they could overpower the Population Police.



Chapter 23.

Chapter 23. Summary

In Chapter 23, Luke recognizes the man Philip is interviewing as Oscar Wydell. Oscar is responsible for killing two people that Luke saw him kill in front of the Population Police building. Oscar says he is responsible for the coup. He says they have the heads of the Population Police jailed in a secret location. Oscar indicates they'll be setting up a new government, a government of the people, and they'll also be holding trials to prosecute those they have in custody. Luke wonders if Oscar is truly the head of the coup because many of the insiders were secret to the other members in case they were caught and tortured.

Chapter 23. Analysis

Once again, Luke is having an inner struggle with what to believe is reality and what is a lie. It's also a struggle with good and evil. Luke thinks Oscar is evil, but now Oscar is portraying himself as a hero. Luke is also struggling with whether or not he wants to be part of the new government, if and when someone, such as Oscar, might ask him to be since he was part of the rebellions.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

In Chapter 24, Luke remembers when he first came to the building that is Population Police headquarters, it was the home of the Grant family. The Grant family is the first fake identity Luke had when he left his parents' farm. The Grants were a rich family, where Luke had servants and a lot of people watching over him, caring about his grades, and making sure he dressed in his tuxedo for dinner. Luke goes into the house and starts to look through the rooms. When he reaches the room that was locked and required a security code when the Population Police kept records. When Luke enters it, all of the records are gone. Someone barges into the room yelling at Luke.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Luke continues to struggle with whether or not to trust what Oscar is saying. Since Oscar seems to tell the story of his history based on who he is telling the story to, again, Luke is having a hard time separating the truth from the lies. When Luke sees the posters hanging in the records' room of the headquarters building, it is a loss of Luke's innocence. The signs portray the killing of third children and how it's the parents' faults that their families are starving. While Luke has heard about the signs from his friends, he has never seen them. Now, he is seeing them firsthand.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

In Chapter 25, Luke crawls to hide behind the signs before Oscar enters the room. Oscar is talking on a radio to someone named Melton, asking Melton why the room is unlocked. Luke then hears someone escort in the leader of the Population Police. Oscar is negotiating with him to tell him where more food is being stored. Oscar then tells Melton to take the former leader back to the attic.

Chapter 25 Analysis

It seems as if Oscar has two personas. His public persona is that of a hero that planned a coup to take over the power from the Population Police and return the power to the people. His behind the doors persona is one thirsty for power. It foreshadows that once Oscar gets the information out of the former leader that he wants he will use the information to control the people just like the Population Police did. It creates a vicious cycle because the Population Police promised things to the people to gain loyalty and now Oscar is trying to do the same thing. Once they have loyalty, however, they don't give anything back to the people.



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

In Chapter 26, to remain unseen, Luke climbs out the window of the room to escape. Luke convinces himself that Oscar only took Aldous Krakenaur to the unlocked room to get information out of Aldous. When Luke retraces his steps back to the secret room, however, someone is there blocking the way. The man tells Luke that they found some harmful chemicals that the police left behind and that they're trying to clean it up now.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Luke sees that the man is lying. The man then uses food as a ploy to direct Luke toward the kitchen and away from the secret room. When Luke replays the conversation between Aldous and Oscar, Luke realizes that Aldous still has power over Oscar because Aldous still has secret information that Oscar wants. Again, Oscar is portraying to the public that he is in power, but the power still lies with Aldous.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

In Chapter 27, Luke sits in the dining room, where the newscaster is up on stage interviewing people who want to tell their stories about their experiences with the Population Police. When a crippled boy tells his story, Luke recognizes him as the stablehand that asked the Population Police for a bigger shovel. When Luke tries to make his way to the stage to talk to the boy as he is descending, Luke notices there is a line of Bodyguards keeping people from the stage.

Chapter 27 Analysis

While the people think they are free, it appears the new government has staged people among the residents. The staged people are supposedly there to protect the people from the Population Police. In reality, however, it seems as if they are there to keep order, but the order is being kept in an underhanded way.

Luke continues to doubt his ability to read people and to understand what is going on. Because he is so innocent and naïve Luke has low self-esteem. Oscar suggesting that the newscasters keep archiving stories of people's experiences with the Population Police is Oscar's way of diverting the people's attention away from everything that the new government is doing to take control of the people once again.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

In Chapter 28, while sitting and listening to the interviews, a couple of people being interviewed declare it is the fault of third children that the people were starving and that the Population Police failed. Philip Twinings takes the microphone away from the second man who begins to blame third children—claiming they're having a technical issue. Luke goes back to the stable to sleep. He wakes the next morning, washes and changes. He heads to the dining room to get something to eat when he sees the signs from the secret room hanging on the stage - the signs that the Population Police hung when they were in power denouncing the existence of third children.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Overnight, it seems as if the power of the government is shifting once again. Technically, with the Population Police out of control, third children are no longer illegal. The following day, the Population Police's signs are hanging once again, making it seem as if in fact third children are still illegal. This creates a further identity crisis for Luke. He wasn't confident of where he belonged in the world when the Population Police were in power. Now that the Population Police are no longer in power, Luke still doesn't feel as if he belongs. The third children signs hanging once again on the walls seem to solidify that third children are going to be illegal under the new government.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

In Chapter 29, Luke flees back to the stables. Luke realizes that Oscar will use whatever is to his benefit to remain in control over the people. When Luke goes back to the dining room, he talks to each group of people at a time to try to make them see that Population Police's thoughts and always still seem to be in control. Luke hears Jen's voice on his head telling him to go on stage and fight for what Luke believes. When Luke tries to do it, bodyguards try to keep him from doing so. Then Luke realizes that the bodyguards are the same men that used to work for the Population Police when Luke was a stablehand.

Chapter 29 Analysis

It appears that even with the Population Police supposedly being out of power that their laws still stand under the new government. Oscar and the boy back in Chiutza stand for the same thing. Rather than having their own beliefs and acting on those beliefs, instead they take on the beliefs that will give them what they want. For both the boy and Oscar it is food they want. For Oscar, however, it also seems as if it is power he wants. The people seem to believe whatever people are saying on the stage. When the people were speaking against the laws of the Population Police, the people in the crowd were for that. When the people on stage, which are probably planted by Oscar and his people, are speaking for the laws of the Population Police, then the people in the crowd are for it. The crowd seems to be the same as Oscar and the boy at Chiutza—whoever is feeding them is the side they're on.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

In Chapter 30, Luke returns to the stable defeated. He believes that nothing has changed and that he will be an illegal part of society forever. Jenny brings Luke's attention to the unlatched door. Luke prepares Jenny to ride.

Chapter 30 Analysis

Jenny seems to be guiding Luke into using another method to get the attention of the people. It foreshadows Luke riding out on Jenny in order to get the attention of the people in the crowd. Once Luke has their attention, he can tell the people the truth about Oscar, about third children and about his own experiences with the Population Police.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

In Chapter 31, Luke climbs on Jenny's back and covers his face and head with the quilt he took from Eli's house. Luke has never ridden on a horse before. Jenny runs through the crowd and jumps up on the stage with Luke on her back. Luke grabs the microphone and starts telling the crowd that this is one of the Population Police's horses—that this is what they were riding for fun while people were starving. Luke points out that everything that happened is the Population Police's fault, not the fault of third children. Then, Luke declares he is a third child.

Chapter 31 Analysis

Luke manages to get the attention of the crowd, but he almost injures and kills some of the crowd while doing it. This paints him in a bad light. Adding to this, when he admits that he is a third child, Luke is endangering his life. The crowd could be on his side or they could be against him. Since the last two days have consisted of people speaking for the Population Police and against third children, it foreshadows the crowd going against Luke—possibly even trying to capture or kill him because they still consider him to be illegal.



Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

In Chapter 32, the security guards at the front pull out their guns. Philip Twinings steps in front of Luke, however, to protect Luke against the guards. When the guards realize they are on camera, one by one they put the guns away. Then, a woman cries out from the crowd that she made the quilt Luke dropped. It's Eli's daughter, Aileen. She defends Luke saying that he is not a thief but that her father gave the quilt to Luke when Eli thought he was going to die. She encourages the crowd to allow Luke to tell his story. Some of the people he rode in the truck with also step forward chanting to allow Luke to speak. Luke tells the whole story of his life, up until the time he arrives back at Population Police headquarters and what Oscar is trying to do. When someone goes to get Oscar to speak out against what Luke is saying, they come back and announce Oscar is gone. Then some of the guards in the audience start to flee too.

Chapter 32 Analysis

Luke fears that the security guards will kill him. The sunshine streaming down on Luke's head is a religious symbol, as if God is shining a spotlight on Luke calling him to Heaven. While the crowd before went along with whatever the people on stage were saying, now the crowd is divided. About half of the crowd is for Oscar being in power and the other believes what Luke is saying about Oscar being in power.



Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

In Chapter 33, while Luke is tearing down the signs later that afternoon, his friends, Nina, Trey and Mr. Talbot show up to help him. Luke points out the three different tables that have sprung up on the lawn of the old Population Police Headquarters. One table is writing a new constitution, while the other is planning a fair food distribution plan. Luke isn't sure what the third table is discussing, but he says that the new government is one run by the people. Luke learns that all of his friends and his brothers are safe.

Chapter 33 Analysis

Luke realizes freedom means different things to different people. For him, Freedom means being with his family on the farm and not having to hide his existence. For the first time in his life Luke has hope. He has hope for being reunited with his family and living a normal life. For the first time, Luke sees a life of possibilities.



Characters

Luke Garner

Luke Garner is a 13-year-old boy. When the novel opens, Luke is working as a stablehand at Population Police Headquarters. Luke is the third child of a family, which makes Luke's existence illegal according to the two-child rule the Population Police enforces. Luke has two older brothers. One of his brothers is Mark Garner.

Luke doesn't have the ability, like some of his friends, to read what people are feeling and thinking on their faces. Luke can't tell when one of the officers is lying to him or telling him the truth. Luke's memories of his friends when he is working at Population Police Headquarters is that the group is always coming up with plans and schemes to win over the government rule. So far, their plans have not been successful, but the group seems to be persistent in trying.

Two of Luke's aliases are Lee Grant and Wendell Smathers. Lee Grant is the name Luke used when he went to school and lived with the Grant Family. When he lived the the Grant family, his home what is now part of the Population Police Headquarters. Wendell Smathers is the name Luke used while working for the Population Police.

Because Luke lived in hiding for the first twelve years of his on his family's farm he is very naïve. Luke is innocent to believe what anyone tells him, so he is easily led. One of the things that keeps Luke grounded, however, is the opinion of his friend Jen who died fighting for the rights and the freedom of third children. In the end, it's Luke that helps to create a new government - a government for the people.

Officer Houk

Officer Houk works for the Population Police. When Luke is chosen from the stablehands, Luke is assigned to work for Officer Houk. Officer Houk instructs Luke and the other boy that is working with Luke to go door to door in the town of Chiutza to instruct the people to meet in the town square to get new I.D. cards. The officer also orders Luke to kill an old woman for treason because she refuses to go to the town square. When Luke drops the gun and runs away, Luke presumes it is Officer Houk that shoots at Luke as he runs.

Luke later finds out that when he dropped the gun, the villagers pick it up and use it to kill Officer Houk. It is the rebellious act of killing one of the Population Police that causes the uprising of the people against the Population Police.



Jen

Jen is Luke's friend. About a year ago, Jen planned a rally against the Population Police to fight for the freedom and rights of third children. Jen is the reason Luke came out of hiding. Jen is also the reason Luke was able to obtain a fake I.D. and go to school. School is where he met all of his friends. Jen and the rest of Luke's friends are the ones that made the plan to infiltrate the Population Police from the inside.

Luke considers Jen to be a courageous person. She is the one who talks him into fighting for his own rights. Jen gets killed during the rally. In his mind, though, Luke can still hear Jen's words encouraging him to go on and to fight for the cause.

Luke continues to hear Jen's voice in his head throughout the novel. It is Jen's words, her thoughts and opinions, that propels Luke to do what is right. First, Jen entices Luke to continue on when he escapes from the Population Police. It's also Jen's voice that gives Luke the courage to stand up on stage and tell the people his story—and the story of so many of his friends that are also third children.

Chiutza Boy

The Chiutza boy is the boy that works with Luke when they reach the town of Chiutza. Luke never learns the boy's real name. On the drive to Chiutza, the boy steals Luke's half of the food that Officer Houk throws in the back seat for the boys to eat. Later, when Luke sneaks back into the village, he finds the boy has taken refuge in one of the villager's sheds. It's from the boy that Luke learns the truth about what happened after Luke refused to shoot the old woman. Luke also learns that the boy is a waffle because he takes the side of whoever will feed him.

Nina

Nina is also a third child. She is one of Luke's friends. At Population Police Headquarters, Nina works in the kitchen. Nina, like Luke, is one of the kids that enlisted in the Population Police to sabotage it from the inside. It's Nina who gets Luke to put manure on the path the policemen will take to the place where they keep the identification cards so that Nina has time to destroy the old identification cards. Nina destroying the old identity cards is what many believe is a part of what eventually led to the overthrowing of the government. Most believe that if the Population Police didn't have to go out to inform the people that they needed to obtain new identification cards that the uprising of the people might never have occurred.

Oscar Wydell

Oscar Wydell is the man that steps forward to take responsibility for overthrowing the Population Police. Luke recognizes Oscar as being one of the bodyguards for the



Population Police. Oscar is in negotiations with the previous leader of the Population Police, which Oscar and his men are holding hostage. Oscar is trying to find out where all of the hidden food is and Oscar plans on using the same laws to take over the rule of the people. When Luke exposes Oscar's plan to the people, Oscar flees.

Philip Twinings

Philip Twinings was a popular newscaster before the Population Police came into power. When he spoke out against the laws of the Population Police, Philip Twinings was exiled. When the news breaks that the people have overthrown the government, Philip Twinings comes out of hiding and takes back over the news. Philip Twinings is also the reporter that shields Oscar's bodyguards from shooting Luke when Luke gets up on stage to announce the innocence of third children and to expose Oscar.

Aldous Krakenaur

Aldous Krakenaur is the leader of the Population Police and the government. He is the one that makes the law that third children are illegal in response to the droughts and the famines are sweeping the country. Krakenaur is also in control of the food supply for the entire country. He becomes Oscar's prisoner when the people overthrow the government. When Oscar flees, it appears as though Krakenaur flees too.

Eli

Eli is the old man that saves Luke from the Population Police when Luke escapes from the abandoned village. Eli leads the other villagers in his town to stand in a line against the Population Police when they try to take Luke away. It is Eli and his wife that sacrifice their own lives to save Luke's life when they think the Population Police are coming after them.

Aileen Mootispaw

Aileen Mootispaw is Eli's daughter. Aileen is also the maker of the quilt that Eli gave to Luke during his escape. When Aileen sees Luke carrying the quilt when he jumps up on stage, she realizes he is the boy that her father saved. Aileen speaks up on Luke's behalf to let the crowd tell his story.



Objects/Places

Population Police Headquarters

The Population Police is an organization that has been in existence for about 12 years. The organization is responsible for controlling the population of the country. When droughts and famine threatened the country, it became a law for each family to only have two children. The Population Police are the enforcers of this law and responsible for killing the third child or any children that come after the second one.

Some of the children or family members join the Population Police. This is because the Population Police control the food supply of the country and having a family member inside is the only way for the family to ensure they obtain food.

Chiutza

Chiutza is the village Luke, the boy, the driver and Officer Houk go to gather the townspeople in the town square to issue new identification cards. While Luke is in Chiutza, he refuses Officer Houks' order to kill the old woman who defies the order to go to the town square. When Luke throws down the gun and flees into the woods, the villagers of Chiutza kill the officer and take back control of their own village. The boy working with Luke stays in the village, but is caught trying to steal food from the villagers.

Horse Stable

The horse stable is where Luke works when is working for the Population Police. The horse stable is where the horses the Population Police ride for fun are fed, housed, and groomed. The stable and the horse Luke is responsible for, Jenny, represents safety and security for Luke. Luke turns to the stable as a place of refuge when he is in the Population Police, and later in the story when Luke returns to the stable after the overthrowing of the government.

Quilt

The quilt Eli gives Luke plays a big part throughout the second half of the novel. Luke uses the quilt as a blanket and shelter when he is on the run from the Population Police. He uses the quilt to cover up his Population Police uniform when he goes into a village to find water and discovers that the government has been overthrown. Luke uses the quilt as a blanket while he is sleeping in the horse stable when he returns to the Population Police Headquarters. Finally, it is the quilt that helps its make, Aileen Mootsipaw, to identify Luke and stand up for his right to tell the corwd his story



Secret Room

The secret room is the locked records' room of the Population Police in the headquarter's building. When Luke enters the room, it is unlocked and all of the files are missing out of the filing cabinets. It's the room where Luke first sees the signs that denounce third children. It's also the room where Luke hides behind the signs when Oscar brings in Krakenaur to question him and bargain with him.

Food

Food plays a pivotal role in the plot of the novel. Everything that happens in the novel revolves somehow around food. The law to have more than two children is implemented because of a famine and drought that threatens the country. The Population Police and the government control the food supply, which also means that they control the people through the distribution or withholding of food. Food is one of the first things the people go looking for at the Population Police Headquarters when the government is overthrown.

Garner Farm

Luke lived the first 12 years of his life living on the Garner Farm. His parents and brothers hid Luke on the farm to keep his existence a secret and to save his life. The woods that surround the farm acted as a shield against the rest of the world from the farm. If someone came to the farm, Luke would hide in the attic of the home. Luke left the farm for the first time when he ran away and got a fake ID with his friend Jen in order to enlist in the Population Police in order to sabotage it from the inside.

Signs

The signs are in the secret room of the Population Police Headquarters. The themes of all of the signs speak against third children. The signs were originally hung by the Population Police to enforce the law. In the end, Oscar's people hang the signs again above the stage where the TV interviews are taking place as a way to brainwash the audience. After Luke tells his story and a new government of the people forms, Luke and his friends tear down the signs.

Population Police Uniform

The Population Police uniforms have an insignia on them. The uniform indicates that the person wearing it is one of the Population Police. When Luke is on the run, he turns the shirt with the insignia on it inside out so that the villagers do not mistake him as a supporter of the Population Police.

Stage

The stage area at police headquarters is where the TV interviews take place over the few days that Luke is there. The stage is the focal point of the room at first, but it loses its excitement after a few days of people telling their stories to the crowd. The stage becomes a focal point again when Luke jumps on it with his horse to tell his own story, which eventually leads the downfall of Oscar and his people, and the formation of the people's government.



Themes

Relationships

One of the primary themes that runs throughout the novel is relationships. For Luke, it is the relationships he has with his friends that propel him to doing something about overthrowing the government and earning his freedom as a third child. Luke has complicated relationships in his life because he doesn't always know who he can trust and who he cannot trust. Luke has a healthy but secretive relationship with his parents and his brothers. Because Luke is a third child, it is illegal for him to exist. This means that for the first 12 years of his life, Luke's relationships are limited to his family and one friend, his neighbor Jen. These are the only people who know Luke exists until he leaves home at 12 to take on some fake identities to help him enlist in the Population Police.

To escape the Population Police, Luke runs and hides in the woods that surround the village of Chiutza. The only typical human relationship Luke seems to have is with his friend Jen, which is the one who encourages Luke to stand up against the government to start. When Jen dies during a rally protesting the third-child law and is killed, Luke continues to hear Jen's encouraging words in his head. Another "normal" relationship Luke has is with his family. They have a normal parent child and sibling relationship, except for the fact that the family has to hide Luke's existence from the rest of the world.

Luke also forms relationships with several of the villagers along his journey back to the Population Police Headquarters. Luke studies and learns the expressions and actions of the villagers to create relationships outside of the ones he is forced to form with the officers of the Population Police. Eventually, Luke is accepted as a third child in the general population, so he is also instrumental in forming a new constitution that makes it legal to be a third child.

Culture

The country's culture plays a pivotal role throughout the whole novel. For example, the cultural norm is for each family to only have two children. Families that have more than two children are seen as contributors to the drought and famine problems that are sweeping the country. This is a cultural norm that the government pounds into the brains and heads of all of the villagers in the country.

The country culture reveals that freedom of the people hinges on the number of people living in the country. In other words, if the government controls the population then there will be enough food and water for the residents of the country to survive. The villagers believe what the government tells them so they accept into their culture that each family should only have a maximum of two children.



The cultural norm changes when the villagers of the country start to realize that the government is not keeping their promise to provide enough food to everyone if the villagers keep the population growth under control.

Coming of Age

One of the primary themes that run throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age, even against adversity, such as having to run from a government that wants to kill you because you are a third child. Luke struggles with the tradition of coming of age because he does not get to experience the normal rites of passage in life because he is a third child.

In some ways, Luke is forced to grow up faster. He chooses to enlist undercover in the Population Police to try to overthrow the government with his friends. This is typically an action for someone who is much older than Luke, but his friends convince Luke that if they won't stand up for their own rights then nobody else will either. In other ways, Luke is still very naïve. Because he has had to live in a world where he is always lying to protect his own identity, Luke has a difficult time assessing the motives of other people.

In some cases, Luke makes the correct assessment as to why someone is treating him the way they are. In other circumstances, Luke fails.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written from the third-person point of view. The novel is written from the narrator's point of view, but tells the story of the main character in the present and also flashes back to incidents that have led the main character to his current situation. The main character is remembering back over all of the events that have taken place over his life, and how these events affected his family and the rest of the nation. The narration switches back and forth between the past and the present.

The point of view of this novel is an intimate point of view that allows the reader to connect closely with the main character. The author allows readers insight to what the main character is thinking. The point of view also allows the author to inject her own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place to the main character. For this reason, the point of view works well with this novel and the author's writing style.

Setting

The novel does not reveal the country in which the story unfolds. The primary setting of the novel is at the Population Police Headquarters. The author never states the specific year or time period. The setting of this novel is important because it is about the culture, rituals and the story of a boy making a journey to fight for the right of freedom in his own country. The main character of the novel is a teenage boy that is a third child, which makes his existence illegal. The setting of the novel has a strong impact on the main character because he lives in a constant state of fear that someone will kill him if they find out who he really is.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is modern. The language of the novel is not formal, yet is educated, strong and descriptive enough that it creates a flow that leaves the reader impressed with the words as much as the plot when the novel ends.

The language of the novel is appropriate to the plot because it is accurate to the characters in the novel and the education level of the writer. The words are descriptive enough that the reader finds enjoyment in the words as well as the plot. The language is not difficult to understand, however, and everything is clear in its context. For this reason, the language of the novel fits well with the plot of the novel.

Structure

The novel contains thirty-three chapters. Each chapter is anywhere from three to 10 pages long. The chapters primarily tell the story in exposition, but there is some dialogue mixed in to the story. The author is the narrator, so it seems as if she is injecting her own voice throughout the novel. The author also takes the reader inside of Luke's head to know what he is thinking and feeling as the novel unfolds. This allows the author to provide her own opinions of the events surrounding the setting of the novel, as well as the actions taking place within the plot, but from the eyes and words of Luke.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows relationships. The subplots involve culture and coming of age.



Quotes

"Some of you will be called to a higher purpose. Some of you will be reassigned to a new task for the glory of our country" (Chapter 1, p. 3).

"There's nothing wrong with old I.D.'s. The new ones are just better" (Chapter 2, p. 13).

"I am through cooperating with the Population Police. You said if we followed your rules, obeyed your laws, we'd have peace and prosperity. Is this peace - men breaking into my house for no reason? Is this prosperity? You said that if my son went off to work for you, we'd all have food. Now my son is gone, and I'm still starving" (Chapter 3, p. 20).

"This woman refused to obey a direct order from a Population Police officer. This is treason. This is punishable by death. I hereby proclaim her sentence. Do all of you understand her crime?" (Chapter 4, p. 23).

"Don't make a sound. Do you want to get us both killed?" (Chapter 6, p. 34).

"I have something you want—information. What are you going to give me for it?" (Chapter 7, p. 39).

"Which side am I on? What do you think? Whichever side feeds me—that's the one for me" (Chapter 8, p. 45).

"Thief! Thief! There's Mary's cloak that was stolen" (Chapter 9, p. 48).

"Ow! Oooh—thanks a lot, Jen. Got any other great advice?" (Chapter 11, p. 54).

"Yee-haw! Look at all this food!" (Chapter 12, p. 58).

"The Population Police will prevail. We always have. It's just a matter of time" (Chapter 13, p. 63).

"We won't run. Look at us. Don't you see that we're going to die anyway? If the Population Police come back, we will die a little sooner. But our consciences will be clear" (Chapter 14, p. 70).

"We're starving because the Population Police don't care if we live or die. And they made our lives so miserable, we stopped caring too" (Chapter 15, p. 76).

"We informed the Population Police...We were like children, tattling" (Chapter 16, p. 81).

"Hey you! What are you doing out there? Why aren't you inside watching, like everyone else? Come on!" (Chapter 17, p. 88).



"I've been safe the last thirteen years. Some things are more important than safety" (Chapter 18, p. 95).

"No more Poppies!" (Chapter 19, p. 100).

"Then I'm free not to talk. I'm free not to tell you a single thing" (Chapter 20, p. 107).

"Hey, kid, you don't need to be eating that. There's lots of good stuff up in that house. Free for the taking" (Chapter 21, p. 109).

"But now, we've uncovered the details of the plot behind the coup...and the mastermind who coordinated it all" (Chapter 22, p. 119).

"But one of the reasons I agreed to speak to you this morning is to assure the entire country that my people and I are in control. We have Aldous Krakenaur and the rest of...his henchmen locked up in a secure location. In due course, we will hold a trial, and anyone who wishes to will be allowed to testify against them" (Chapter 23, p. 123).

"I suppose we can be anyone we want to now" (Chapter 24, p. 126).

"That's a start. The rabble like food, all right. And they like me as long as I'm providing it. But I warn you—I want more than food. We'll just have to see if your promises pan out." Chap. 25, p. 137

"Oh, hey, I wouldn't go that way if I were you. They found some dangerous chemicals the Population Police left behind in one of those rooms back there" (Chapter 26, p. 142).

"Free doesn't mean safe" (Chapter 27, p. 150).

"As long as they hate the Population Police, I'm okay" (Chapter 28, p. 156).

"Those people up on stage have been saying the Population Police were kind of unfairly accused. Framed, you know? A lot of things we blamed them for, it was really the illegals' fault. I reckon if they're allowed to say that up on stage, and on TV and everything, there must be some truth to it" (Chapter 29, p. 164).

"It's all a setup. It always was. The people talking on stage - they're signaling all the rest of the Population Police officials. They're brainwashing the crowd. It's all very carefully controlled. They'd never let me up there" (Chapter 30, p. 168).

"It's all a setup, everybody saying the same thing. The only people allowed to talk now are the ones who will blame third children, not the Population Police. But it's all a lie. Third children didn't steal anyone's food. They didn't force the Population Police to beat anyone. Third children don't have any power at all" (Chapter 31, p. 176).

"He's gone! Oscar ran away!" (Chapter 32, p. 187).

"...but, this is our new government. The people" (Chapter 33, p. 190).



Topics for Discussion

Who is Luke Garner? Why does he feel like she doesn't belong anywhere that he lives? What does Luke recall about his childhood? What is Luke's biggest demon that haunts him throughout his life? Why is this important? How does it change his life?

Why does Luke Garner become Lee Grant in the first place? Discuss the relationship between Luke Garner and Lee Grant. Are they really the same person? Does Luke ever accept his role as Lee Grant? How does Luke feel about Lee? How does Lee feel about Luke? Why does Lee end up running away from the Grants?

Why does Luke Garner become Wendell Smathers in the first place? Discuss the relationship between Luke Garner and Wendell Smathers. Are they really the same person? Does Luke ever accept his role as Wendell Smathers? How does Luke feel about Wendell? How does Wendell feel about Luke? Why does Wendell end up running away from the school?

How does Jen die? How does this affect Luke's future? How does Jen live on long after her death?

Who is Jenny? Why does she come to accept Luke as part of her family? What kind of relationship do Jenny and Luke have? Does Jenny represent or act as a symbol of something or someone to Luke? How does Luke feel about Jenny? How does the reader know this?

What happens when Luke refuses to shoot and kill the old woman in Chiutza? How does this incident change the dynamics of the relationship between the government and the residents of the country?

Discuss the third-child law. What impact does this law have on the culture of the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them or hold them back? Why is the culture an issue to the characters? Does the culture have anything to do with way that relationships develop and evolve?