

Because of Mr. Terupt Study Guide

Because of Mr. Terupt by Rob Buyea

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Plot Summary

Because of Mr. Terupt, by Rob Buyea, is a novel about one year in the life of a fifth grade class at Snow Hill School. Told through the eyes of seven students, the class is deeply affected by their new teacher Mr. Terupt and the tragic accident that touches all their lives.

As the school year opens, the fifth grade class of Snow Hill School in Connecticut meets the new teacher, Mr. Terupt. Their reactions to him vary. Peter, the class cut-up, tries to see what he can get away with and is impressed when Mr. Terupt is cool about correcting his behavior. Jessica, having just moved from California, appreciates the way he relates to her since he is new also, and Anna, who tries to stay in the background, likes the way he subtly draws her into class discussions. Luke is the most studious, so he appreciates the creative class projects Mr. Terupt devises, while the more morose Jeffrey just hopes to be ignored. Alexia is too concerned with manipulating the other girls to pay much attention to the new teacher and Danielle is too worried about being manipulated by Alexia.

Before long, all of the students warm up to Mr. Terupt, who has a way of engaging everyone and making them want to do better. He even gives them a party day as a reward to reaching certain goals and gets Mrs. Williams, the principal, to agree to let the class go outside to play in the snow on their reward day. When a game of roughhousing goes awry, Mr. Terupt is hit with an icy snowball and goes into a coma, having previously sustained a number of concussions as a high school and college wrestler.

The accident has a dramatic impact on all the students, who worry about the role they played. However, it soon becomes obvious that the teacher's influence on them continues even when he is unable to interact with them. Jeffrey, who has long felt guilty because his stem cell and bone marrow donations were unable to save his brother's life, finally reaches out to his grieving parents and tries to put his family together again. Danielle approaches her conservative, religious family in the hope of getting them to accept her friendship with Anna, whose single mother has been ostracized since becoming pregnant as a teenager. Alexia comes to terms with the events that have caused her to lie in order to manipulate and control others and learns to be a true friend, and Peter learns that students with learning disabilities are sometimes more wise than those in the school's "regular" classrooms.

As the school year draws to a close, the students reflect on how they have benefited from Mr. Terupt's influence and are thrilled when he arrives at school on the last day and the principal announces that he will be their teacher again in sixth grade.



September and October

Summary

September and October

Because of Mr. Terrupt is a novel by former grade school teacher Rob Buyea. The book takes place during one school year and is told through the eyes of a group of fifth graders who quickly come to love their new teacher, Mr. Terrupt. One winter day, however, a freak accident puts their beloved teacher into a coma and causes all the students to rethink their personal code and relationship with fellow students.

In the chapters taking place in September, Peter opens the book by saying that since we are stuck with having teachers, the best we can do is hope to get a new one who does not yet know the rules, which enables students to get away with things. He tests this theory on his new teacher, Mr. Terrupt, by using the bathroom pass several times, but eventually Mr. Terrupt suggests that he should be called Mr. Peebody or Peter the Pee-er. He thinks the new teacher is cool and funny, and since Peter is also funny, he begins to think that school could be fun. Jessica Writeman has recently moved from the West Coast to Connecticut and her mother brings her to Snow Hill School for her first day. Mrs. Williams, the principal, takes her to room 202, where Mr. Terrupt tells her he is new also. He smiles and expresses interest in the book she is reading, and she begins to think things will be OK. Luke likes school and is good at it, so he is excited when Mr. Terrupt announces the Dollar-Word math project. Each letter of the alphabet is assigned a numerical value – "a" is worth one point, "b" is worth two, etc. with "z" being worth 26 points. The idea is to find words that add up to exactly one dollar. Soon Peter announces that he has found a word, but when he spells out "buttocks" he is told that "buttocks" has a k, then Luke comes up with "buttheads" and over the course of the next three weeks becomes the Dollar-Word champ.

Alexia, or Lexie, thinks that she needs to tell Jessica whom she can and cannot have as a friend. She approaches her. Upon learning that she moved from California, Alexia lies and says she used to live there, too. She points to Danielle, who is Alexia's friend, and warns Jessica that she should not be friends with her. Jessica thanks her for the information. Alexia muses that this is how she got the girl war started. Jeffrey makes observations about his classmates – Danielle is fat, Alexia thinks she's a Hollywood star, Peter is a wise guy, and Luke is smart. He thinks that Mr. Terrupt figured Peter out quickly. Jeffrey hopes he will not try to figure him out, too, because he is not good in school. Danielle, who lives on a farm with her immediate family and grandparents, is having problems with Lexie, who sometimes is her friend but other times ignores her and calls her fat. She blames Jessica for the way Lexie treats her. Anna muses that she does not raise her hand or say much in school. So, since she does not get noticed much, she has an opportunity to observe her surroundings. However, Mr. Terrupt is different from her previous teachers. He lets her know when he is about to call on her



and asks for her opinion when the class is discussing something. She says this made her nervous at first, but it turned out to be a good thing.

Peter begins the October chapter by saying that he got very excited about the plant unit Mr. Terupt planned. The students work in groups of two. After growing bean plants from seed, they are allowed to feed their plants anything they want for a week. Some odd concoctions are dismal failures, but Danielle and Anna's experiment is a huge success because Danielle uses natural ingredients from her family's farm. Anna is very excited until Lexie says she was just lucky because Danielle did all the work. Luke is happy to have Jeffrey as his partner because he leaves Luke alone to do as he pleases. Luke gets some items from his home chemistry set and secretly adds some things he gets from his father's garage. When he mixes the potion, it begins to smoke, and the fire alarms go off. To his surprise, Mr. Terupt takes the blame, and Luke thinks he is a very special teacher.

Jeffrey says that when the fire department came to school, the fire marshal demanded that the students' Dollar Word posters be taken off the walls because they are a fire hazard, but Mr. Terupt refused. He said that the students had worked hard on them. Suddenly, Jeffrey feels badly that he did not work harder on the project and resolves to do so in the future. Anna says that she was upset about the plant experiment because she did not want her plant to die, but Mr. Terupt said that when the experiment ended, she could take home the control plant. She does not know Danielle well and wonders why she is sometimes friends with Alexia, who is mean but all the girls listen to her. She reflects on the fact that her mother had her when she was sixteen and has since been shunned by her parents and others/ Anna has never met her father. She is thrilled when the plant she and Danielle grew survives and thrives. One day it is knocked over, and she suspects that Alexia did it. She wonders if Mr. Terupt knew what he was starting when he made her and Danielle partners.

Jessica is disturbed by Alexia's treatment of Danielle and decides to get to know her. She approaches Danielle at recess, and they talk. Danielle says that all the other girls except Anna follow Lexie's commands and that her family thinks Anna is a bad influence because of her family situation. Jessica offers to be friends with Danielle, but Alexia gets angry when she sees them talking. She is afraid that if she lets Danielle get away with disobeying her orders, others might think they can do the same. She finds Danielle in the bathroom and tells her Jessica has been saying mean things about her, causing Danielle to cry. Danielle reflects on the fact that her grandmother wants her to stay away from Anna because she is a bad influence, but Danielle thinks she seems nice and wants to be her friend. She also recalls the bathroom incident with Lexie, who said Jessica is the one who killed the plant. Danielle has known Lexie since second grade, but she has changed. Her grandmother says that there is something going on with her that no one knows about. Danielle prays for help in sorting out all the girl stuff.



Analysis

Because of Mr. Terupt is told in a series of very short sections -- sometimes just a sentence or two -- from the perspective of the students in Mr. Terupt's fifth-grade classroom at Snow Hill School in Connecticut. The first chapter covers events that take place in September as the school year begins and the students meet Mr. Terupt, who is new to the school. This section also begins to introduce the students who will tell the story, beginning with Peter, the class clown. From the onset, it is clear that Peter takes few things seriously and he is thrilled to have a new teacher because this means he will be able to get away with much more mischief until the new guy catches on. He begins immediately by taking advantage of the bathroom pass that hangs in the classroom, going to the restroom multiple times simply to get out of class and goof off, but this behavior prompts the first clue that Mr. Terupt is different. Rather than berating Peter or punishing him, he teases him in a friendly way and Peter immediately is won over.

Other students quickly follow suit. Jessica is impressed by how Mr. Terupt relates to her since both are new to the school, and Anna appreciates the subtle way he brings her into class discussions without making her feel uncomfortable. Luke, the most studious of the group, is impressed by the ingenious projects Mr. Terupt invents, particularly the Dollar Word game. Luke is good at the game and throughout the book, in each chapter he narrates, each dollar word is singled out even months after the project is completed. Luke's continued focus on finding dollar words is symbolic of the ongoing influence Mr. Terupt has on him and on his fellow students.

This section also introduces Alexia, the class glamor girl, who prides herself on running the lives of the other girls in her class. The author hints that there is a reason for her behavior but at this point, she is depicted as a troublemaker who delights in calling the shots and making others' lives either happy or miserable, depending on her mood. Danielle, who is a bit heavy, is most often at her mercy, being included in Lexie's group or ostracized, as Lexie sees fit at the time.

The conflict between Danielle and Anna, along with their respective families, is also set up in the first two chapters. Danielle comes from a conservative Christian family and they look down on Anna's mother, who got pregnant as a teenager, so they forbid Danielle from associating with Anna because she might be a bad influence.

The book's first two chapters establish a dynamic that is typical of many classrooms of fifth graders. There is drama among the girls that leads to hurt feelings and competition among the boys that leads to aggression. Mr. Terupt is depicted as a "cool" teacher because he is more lenient than others the students have had in the past. However, among the students' observations are hints that the way he handles certain classroom situations might lead to problems in the long run.



Discussion Question 1

Come up with a three-word description for each of the following characters: Peter, Alexia, Danielle, Luke, Anna, Jeffrey and Jessica. Explain why you chose these words.

Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast the characters of Anna and Danielle, including their backgrounds, families and home life. Why does Danielle's family object to her friendship with Anna?

Discussion Question 3

What impact does the plant experiment have on the friendship between Danielle and Anna?

Vocabulary

Squash (verb), rookie, barge (verb), urinal, reaction, somewhat, syndrome, exceptional, multitask, disinfect, corresponding, strategy, concentrate, strut, demonstrate, interrupt, snicker, nonetheless, excellent, equipment, gazebo, reassure, observer, opposite, teamwork, variable, fume (verb), concoction, ingredient, interact, manipulate, recreate, convince, billow, confrontation, blurt, hesitation, ostracized, shun, influence, scowl.



November and December

Summary

November and December

Luke opens the November chapter by talking about Mr. Terupt's latest math idea – figuring out the number of blades of grass on the soccer field. After some discussion, they decided to count 10-centimeter by 10-centimeter squares and estimate from there, so they make cardboard cutouts and go to the soccer field. While Lexie is bent over counting blades of grass, Peter flings his cardboard cutout like a Frisbee at her and hits her rear end. She is not hurt, and Mr. Terupt makes Peter sit down but does not punish him further. Luke muses that perhaps the soccer field incident set the students up for disaster later on. He admires the way Mr. Terupt handled it and reflects on how much he learned from the math project. Jessica has been ostracized by Alexia and the other girls, who have now accepted Danielle again, and Jessica's only friend is Anna, but that is OK because she likes her. Mr. Terupt announces that the entire class will read a book called *The Summer of the Swans*, which is about a boy named Charlie who has Down syndrome and his older sister Sara. He wants the students to think about their relationship, so over the next few weeks, they will go in groups to visit the Collaboration Classroom, where the school's special needs students are taught. Jeffrey immediately makes friends with a boy named Joey and the girls are amazed when another boy named James accurately says there are 712 utensils on the cafeteria table without counting them. Jeffrey thinks about how great the kids in the Collaboration Classroom are and muses that he knew right away that James was autistic because he did not look at anyone or speak. The kids remind him of Michael because love poured from them, but he has never told anyone about Michael. Jessica approaches Jeffrey on the playground and says she thinks he has a secret – he knows someone with special needs – and says she has a secret too. She tells Jeffrey that her father directs plays in California and found a girlfriend at work, which is why she and her mother moved to Connecticut. Her father called her at the beginning of school but has not called since, and Jeffrey thinks to himself that he knows what it is like to have parents who do not talk to you because he has two, but he says nothing. Anna, who is enjoying her friendship with Jessica, says she was scared when Mr. Terupt announced the trips to the special needs class but now she is comfortable. In class, she tells Mr. Terupt about several single female teachers. Then, when Jessica asks about James, Jeffrey describes the issue of autism to everyone's surprise. He clams up again when he's asked how he knows about autism. Danielle has mixed feelings about being in Lexie's group when they go to the Collaborative Classroom because while she is very friendly with the kids there, afterward she talks badly about Jessica and Anna. After one incident, Danielle explodes at Lexie and runs to the bathroom, where she finds Jessica. She realizes that she is her true friend rather than Lexie. She prays for God to help Alexia be less mean. Alexia reflects that Peter always picks on her, which probably means he likes her because all the boys think she is pretty, unlike Danielle. She likes going to the Collaborative Classroom because the kids love you no matter what.



In the December chapter, Peter was upset when Mr. Terupt announced that they had to spend time with the retards, but now he has changed his mind because the kids are cool, especially James. He likes Mr. Terupt's idea for their holiday party, which involves forming groups and creating centers focused on Christmas, Ramadan, Kwanzaa or Hanukkah. Peter asks if they can invite James and the others, and Mr. Terupt agrees and appears to wipe his eyes. Jessica chooses Ramadan and is in a group with Anna, Danielle, Jeffrey, and Alexia. Alexia immediately begins to boss everyone around and try to cause trouble. After she insults both Danielle and Jessica, Mr. Terupt interrupts and takes her out of the room, then returns alone. He tells the group that they must stand up for each other and not allow Alexia to be mean. Jessica thinks that she has not been brave like the characters in the books she reads.

Luke becomes the victim of a prank when Peter puts glue on the bottoms of his shoes and when he goes to the bathroom to clean them, he overhears Mr. Terupt talking with Alexia in the hall, saying he will no longer tolerate her meanness. Back in the classroom, Peter has splashed water on the floor on purpose. Mrs. Williams, the principal, slips and falls, and Mr. Terupt makes it clear that this must not happen again, looking directly at Peter. Alexia reflects on her conversation with Mr. Terupt and the fact that kids used to make fun of her until she started attacking them and lying. Her mother has thrown her father out of the house and told her not to let people push her around, so she vows that no one will ever make fun of her again. She now hates Mr. Terupt. When Jeffrey and Jessica are working on their project, he tells her about his brother Michael, who had Down syndrome and leukemia. Their parents had Jeffrey in order to use his stem cells and bone marrow to save Michael, but he died anyway, Jessica says something no one has ever said to him before – that it is not his fault.

Anna says that Alexia has been quiet since her talk with Mr. Terupt. She works up the courage to invite Jessica and Danielle over to her house. While Jessica accepts immediately, Danielle hesitates and says she needs to get permission. Danielle says the holiday centers turned out great and were a big hit with everyone, including the special needs children. However, she has not worked up the courage to ask for permission to go to Anna's house. Jessica tells her mother about the invitation to Anna's house and the reason Danielle's family probably will not let her go. Her mother says that the divorce papers have arrived and that she does not know if Jessica's father will call her again.

Analysis

These two sections continue to set up the relationships among the students themselves and their relationship with Mr. Terupt, leading up to the book's pivotal event. The soccer field and holiday projects are established as further examples of Mr. Terupt's innovative teaching methods that get even the most disinterested students engaged, and his penchant for projects that get the students to work together. In preventing Alexia from teaming with her best friends for the holiday project, but rather putting her into a group of students with whom she does not get along, establishes his recognition of her issues and is a subtle way of giving her an opportunity to act in a different way.



However, the way he handles Alexia's behavior during the holiday project and Peter's mischief on the soccer field, much like his reaction to Peter's early bathroom ploy and splashing water on the classroom floor, set up the conflict over who is to blame for the accident that eventually occurs. While he is clearly trying to make the students assume a greater degree of personal responsibility, the question remains whether they are ready for it and whether he explains his methods sufficiently. Hints of this come when Luke muses about the impact of the soccer field incident on later events and other hints dropped in the students' narratives.

Having the students begin working with the special needs students in the Collaborative Classroom is significant for several reasons. Primarily, it gives the students an opportunity to see a different side of their friends and in some cases, themselves. For example, Alexia continues to behave in a reprehensible manner toward the other girls, lying and manipulating them to suit her own whims, but she softens and shows a different side of her personality when she is with the Collaborative students, then turns cruel again immediately upon leaving the special needs classroom. Jeffrey's dark history begins to be revealed when he builds an immediate rapport with one of the special needs children. Although the other students do not know about Michael, it is clear that someone with special needs has had an impact on Jeffrey and is responsible for making him who he is, and eventually he reveals his secret to Jessica. The students gradually begin to get over their fears and relate to their new friends, and it is Peter, who initially referred to the Collaborative kids as retards, who suggests inviting them to their holiday party.

The issue of fault and blame comes up a number of times in this section. Most important is Jessica telling Jeffrey that his brother's death is not his fault because it is clear that he blames himself and perhaps, even worse, his parents blame him also since they had him specifically so he could donate stem cells and later bone marrow to save Michael. The issue has already come up in other ways, including Alexia lying to Danielle saying that Jessica purposely killed their plant, and will continue to be a major theme throughout the novel.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Mr. Terupt have his students begin interacting with those in the collaborative classroom? What does he hope to accomplish? How do the students react initially? How do their attitudes change as time goes on?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Jeffrey feel that his brother's death is his fault? How has this affected his family life?



Discussion Question 3

What happens in this section to explain Alexia's attitude toward her fellow students? Does this justify her actions? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

Apparently, gauntlet, mission, estimate, calculate, challenge, stampede, disaster, delivery, pretend, average, predict, accurate, betray, exchange, disorder, prefer, utter, gigantic, particularly, eventually, distracted, random, sway, astonished, appropriate, slump, autistic, ignore, ruin, spout, situation, required, component, collaborate, oversee, tirelessly, trivia, exaggerated, escort, position (verb), dimensions, outwit, authority, tolerate, discipline, eavesdrop.



January and February

Summary

January and February

The January chapter opens with Jessica going to Anna's house. Her mother stays to talk with Terri, Anna's mother. Jessica learns that Terri works in a library and takes art classes, which makes Jessica wish Danielle, who is also artistic, could have come. Anna is happy that her mother likes Jessica's mother and hopes they will become friends. She reflects that she had a great time with Jessica and hopes that Danielle can come next time. Danielle did not go to Anna's house because she was too afraid to ask her mother, but vows to do so next time. Mr. Terupt calls a class meeting to discuss an upcoming free day the class has earned. Several people contribute ideas for the day and it is decided that the Collaborative kids can come for part of it. Peter suggests that they go outdoors for part of the free day and Mr. Terupt says he has gotten special permission to go out in the snow providing everyone has snow pants, hats, gloves, and boots. Peter dreams of snowballs and thinks this will be the best class party day ever. Jessica tells Mr. Terupt that since she comes from California, she does not have snow pants. Luke offers her his sister's old ones. She is surprised because she thought Luke only cared about himself. Luke is infuriated when Peter wins a class contest and vows to hit him with a snowball during the class outing. Jeffrey reflects on the fact that before Jessica, only Michael told him that the situation was not his fault. His parents have been devastated by Michael's death, essentially ignoring this Christmas, the second since Michael died.

February opens with the day of the class party and Peter is anxious to go outside but they spend the morning playing games indoors. Peter embarrasses Luke during a game of Scattergories and Luke resolves to get him. Jeffrey is surprised to find himself playing games with his teacher and reflects that Peter never gets into trouble for the things he does. He wishes he had never gotten involved in what happens next. Arriving on the field outdoors, the students begin climbing a mountain of snow and Peter makes a perfect snow ball but puts it into his pocket because Mr. Terupt has forbidden throwing snowballs. Peter pushes Lexie down the snow pile, which starts a game among the students. Suddenly Peter is knocked down and when several others begin pushing him into the snow, he jumps up and throws the snowball. The scene then plays out in a series of one- and two-sentence chapters. Jessica reveals that the attack on Peter was her idea, leading the other kids to gang up on him. Luke says he felt great about his role in the incident until everything shattered. Jeffrey thinks Peter had it coming and Danielle regrets that she did not say no to Jessica's plan. She sees Mr. Terupt stand up and get in the way just as Peter throws the snowball, which has now turned to ice. Peter did not want to hurt anyone and wishes he could take it back, and Danielle prays that Mr. Terupt will be OK.



Analysis

In these chapters, the author builds tension toward the book's pivotal event as the class prepares for its outing. The concept of snowballs comes up on several occasions as Luke plans to throw one at Peter after he bests him in a contest. Peter and Luke are portrayed as opposite characters, with Peter being the class clown and Luke being the studious, serious one. In his narrative, Luke acknowledges that Peter has always gotten on his nerves, but it is what appears to be his unbelievable luck that finally sets Luke off. Not only has Peter gotten away with several classroom incidents -- the bathroom passes, splashing the water that Mrs. Williams slipped in, putting glue on the bottoms of his shoes, hitting Alexia with the cardboard cutout -- he has simply guessed the right number of links in the chain while Luke carefully calculated his answer using mathematical principles. His anger at Peter brings Luke into the picture with the upcoming incident.

In the February chapter, the author uses a series of very short chapters -- most only one or two sentences -- to set up the incident in which Mr. Terupt is hit with a snowball. Each student gives his or her own perspective and, in some cases, involvement in the incident, without ever describing exactly what happened. In the end, it is clear that a terrible accident has occurred and Mr. Terupt has been seriously hurt, but the author's technique is effective in building suspense and enabling the reader to get inside the minds and feelings of each student.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Luke get so angry when Peter guesses the correct number of links in the paper chain? How does this seemingly-minor incident point out the differences in the two boys' personalities? What else happens to make Luke angry at Peter? Why does he seek to hurt him?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Jeffrey's home life. How does his newfound friendship with Jessica affect how he feels about his situation with his parents?

Discussion Question 3

Name several things that lead up to the snowball incident during the class' free day. What part does each student play in what happens?



Vocabulary

Genuine, outstanding, sidelined, mention, adjourn, tentatively, generosity, prejudge, random, production, colleagues, inoculate, mope, attendance, respect, resolve, confuse, trance, fume, monstrous, sprint, plunge, seize, retaliate, contorted, ingenious, execute, flail, nudge, victor, malicious.



March and April

Summary

March and April

As the March chapter opens, Jessica says that Mr. Terupt has been in a coma for a few weeks. Mrs. Williams tells the class that what happened was an accident and no one's fault, but Jessica is not sure she believes that. She is not sure who to blame – perhaps Mrs. Williams since she gave permission for the class to go outside. Luke's mother takes him to see Mr. Terupt in the hospital. He is lying unconscious with many tubes and machines and Luke is certain he will die. As they get onto the elevator, Luke thinks that Mr. Terupt is to blame for putting too much trust in the students and letting things go too far. Jeffrey would like to see Mr. Terupt but cannot bring himself to visit him. He thinks it should be him in a coma, just like with his brother, and thinks things were better when he did not care. Anna tells Jessica and Danielle that she wants to visit Mr. Terupt but wants all three of them to go together. At home, Danielle announces that she wants to visit her teacher and that Anna's mother has agreed to take them. Her grandmother says she cannot go, but her mother says that although she does not like her being around Anna or her mother, it is probably better for her to go with her friends than alone. Danielle arrives at Anna's house, being dropped off by her 27-year-old brother Charlie, and Anna is surprised when her mother recognizes Charlie's truck. Danielle is struck by the fact that her brother is the same age as Anna's mother. Although she realizes that Anna is probably thinking of playing matchmaker, her family would never want to see Charlie and Terri together.

Arriving at the hospital, everyone is shocked to see Alexia in Mr. Terupt's room, sitting next to the bed with her back to them. She tells Mr. Terupt that she is trying to be nice and hopes that would make him happy. Jessica approaches, and Alexia says she is sorry and confesses that she has told many lies. Jessica tells her about her father and his girlfriend. All of the girls hug and cry, then gather around Mr. Terupt's bed with Jessica feeling his power even though he is in a coma. Alexia reflects on her visit and thinks she saw Peter leaving the hospital. She says she told Mr. Terupt that Peter has not talked to anyone since the accident. Although he is at fault for throwing the snowball, he did not mean for it to hit Mr. Terupt. She was surprised to look up and see the other girls, and now she has three friends.

When Charlie picks Danielle up, Anna notices that he and her mother smile and wave to each other. Afterward, Anna asks her mother if the accident was her fault for being one of the kids who had gotten Peter angry. Then, she asks if her mother blames her for being ostracized, but her mom says she is lucky to have her. Danielle is glad she went to see Mr. Terupt and feels that even in his coma, he brought the four girls together. She prays for Mr. Terupt and all her friends, including Peter, and asks for forgiveness for her part in the accident. Luke goes to see Mr. Terupt again and meets Dr. Wilkins, who says Mr. Terupt used to wrestle and suffered several concussions that weakened his brain in



places. The snowball hit one of the weaker areas and cracked his skull. He cannot say for certain if he will recover, but he will soon be having surgery to stop some bleeding. When Luke asks if any of the other students know about this, Dr. Wilkins says a boy named Peter knows about the surgery but not the concussions.

In April, Mrs. Williams has stepped in to teach the class, but nothing has changed. Jessica struggles to find the reason for everything that has happened. She sees that Alexia has changed and Danielle has been allowed to go to Anna's house, but cannot understand the reasons for everyone else, including herself. Luke says it is clear that Peter blames himself for the accident. Although things would be different if the snowball had hit anyone else, Luke cannot bring himself to talk to him because he does not want to find out why he threw the snowball.

Danielle's grandmother surprises her by praying for Mr. Terupt. On the swings during recess, Anna mentions that Charlie was at her house visiting with her mom the previous day. When she suggests that if they get married, she and Danielle would be sisters, Danielle tells her that will never happen because her family does not approve of her mother. Anna realizes that even after all this time, her mother is still ostracized and that she, too, will pay for the rest of her life for her part in Mr. Terupt's accident. Jessica wonders if one reason for Mr. Terupt's accident was to help Danielle's family accept Anna and her mother.

The students learn that James has improved so much that he will be leaving and joining a regular classroom in the town where he lives. She invites the students to a going away party for him to thank them for their part in his improvement. James smiles broadly when they arrive and then walks over to Peter, hugs him and says, "Not your fault." Luke then agrees that it is not Peter's fault and tells everyone about the concussions, also confessing his role in the incident and everyone hugs each other. Alexia reflects on Peter originally calling the collaborative students retards, but one of them helped him. She is grateful for her friendship with the other girls and hopes Mr. Terupt gets to see how he helped her.

Anna is happy about the recent positive developments, but she is still crushed by Danielle's words. She finally talks with her mother, who says that she and Charlie went to school together. He was unkind to her when she got pregnant, but he has now apologized for his behavior. She says that Danielle's parents and grandparents, like her own parents, are old-fashioned and religious and will probably never accept her situation. Anna resolves to be positive and silently thanks Mr. Terupt, hoping Danielle and Charlie will be able to change their family's opinion. Danielle is glad everyone has begun talking about the accident and prays that God will cleanse all of them. She talks with Charlie about Anna's mom. He says that although he hopes to see her again, he does not think they can change their family's opinions and should not start a family war.

Jeffrey thinks that although the silence in the classroom is over, the silence in his house still persists. Deciding that he does not have to wait for his parents to talk to him, he goes to his mother, who stays in bed all day since Michael died, and tells her it is not her fault. Then he tells his father the same thing and he says it is not Jeffrey's fault



either. Jeffrey begins resting next to his mother in bed each day after school, knowing Mr. Terupt would think it was the right thing to do.

Analysis

The issue of fault and blame grows in this section as various students ponder the issue. The students seem to think it is important to assess blame for what has happened, with some even pointing the finger at Mrs. Williams, the principal, for allowing them to go out in the snow and the first signs emerge that Mr. Terupt himself had a role to play since he did not rein in the students' behavior when it began to get out of hand. The issue spills over into other areas as well with Jeffrey continuing to struggle with his role in his brother's death, causing him to be unable to visit Mr. Terupt in the hospital because of the bad memories it evokes. Jessica is blaming herself for her father's absence in her life, and Anna wondering if she is to blame for the fact that her mother's family and friends abandoned her when she got pregnant.

However, as time goes on, some of the characters begin to move away from fault and blame and into thinking about potential reasons for what has happened. Luke's conversation with Mr. Terupt's doctor finally reveals the reason a freak accident became life-threatening and he realizes that Peter has been blaming himself unnecessarily. Given Mr. Terupt's history, any minor head injury could have led to a similar result.

Eventually the children's questions about blame and guilt open up conversations that lead to redemption for a number of characters. Jeffrey finally heeds Jessica's admonition that he was not responsible for Michael's death and essentially becomes the parent in his house by absolving his mother and father of the guilt they have felt also. This opens the beginning of a dialogue and much needed healing in his silent, morose household. Likewise, Alexia is prompted to confess her lies and enter into a genuine friendship with Jessica, Danielle and Anna. Anna finally opens a dialogue with her mother and Danielle gets the courage to approach her family about visiting Anna's home.

These two chapters also bring a number of secrets to light and as a result, the characters find the beginning of a resolution to their problems. Anna's mother's recognition of Danielle's brother's truck is a mystery to Anna until her mother reveals that the two were friends in high school until her pregnancy turned everyone against her. That incident, along with Danielle's confession about her family's feelings toward Terri, at first threatens but eventually deepens the friendship between Anna and Danielle and brings the promise of a renewed friendship between Terri and Charlie. When Alexia runs into the other girls at the hospital, she is prompted to finally reveal the lies she has told in order to stir up trouble among her classmates and they forgive her, opening the door to a genuine friendship among all the girls.

This section also shows the fifth graders finding healing power in unexpected places. Although they were initially frightened by the prospect of interacting with the special needs children, they now count them as friends and James is the first person to really



look at Peter since the accident and absolve him of blame, opening the door for the other students to do the same. Jeffrey finds the strength to begin healing his fractured family and Charlie apologizes for his earlier treatment of Terri. However, the central force remains Mr. Terupt. Even as he is lying unconscious in the hospital, his spirit and his strong influence over his students continues to be felt and is the force behind every insight and every good instinct they have.

Discussion Question 1

What is the significance of Charlie as a character in the book? What role does he play in the relationship between Anna and her mother and the one between Anna and Danielle?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways do Jeffrey and his parents have a reversal of roles in this section? How does it affect the dynamic within their family?

Discussion Question 3

Describe three ways in which Mr. Terupt influences his students while he is injured and in a coma.

Vocabulary

Coma, numb, paralyzed, substitute, concentrate, emotion, rumor, conscious, dealt, pester, eventually, palindrome, frail, disrespectful, trigger, disinfectant, linger, dominate, incessant, fidget, vanish, ajar, transpire, exhausted, endure, multiple, undergo, assume, predicament, tragedy, slumber, momentum, scuff, contribute, putter, invasive, predator, antidote, looming, nemesis, confess, absolute.



May and June

Summary

May and June

In May, all the kids, along with some parents and teachers, are gathered at the hospital while Mr. Terupt is in surgery. Looking around the room, Jessica realizes that Mr. Terupt does not have any family there and he did not have any family photos on his desk at school. She hears Ms. Newberry, one of the teachers, saying she cares about him and was just beginning to get close to him. Danielle has come to the hospital with her mother and she notices that the gathering reminds her of their class meetings. Suddenly Jeffrey pulls out the fake microphone they use for the meetings and begins passing it around and everyone shares their thoughts. Eventually a doctor arrives and says that Mr. Terupt made it through the surgery but is still in a coma. The students ask questions, but the doctor says there is nothing to do but wait and see, and Anna urges everyone to be positive as Mr. Terupt told her once. Jeffrey remembers that his family was also told to wait and see about Michael but he died. People begin to leave and soon Anna and her mother are sitting directly across from Danielle and her mother. Anna asks if they can pray together, and Danielle leads them in a beautiful prayer, realizing that Anna's request was designed to show Danielle's family that her mother is a good person.

Jessica's mother takes Jeffrey home, and he tells Jessica that she should stop thinking the accident was her fault. He also thanks her for helping him and giving him someone to talk with. Before they drive away, they see Jeffrey's mother, not wearing pajamas now, hug him as he goes into the house. As they drive home, her mother tells Jessica that the accident was Mr. Terupt's fault. He handled the various classroom mischief the way he did because he was trying to teach the kids personal responsibility and, perhaps, they were not ready for so much responsibility. Jessica asks if Mr. Terupt will get into trouble, and her mother says everyone just wants him to get better. Her mother also says that what happened between her and her father is not her fault, and Jessica feels that their car is filled with quiet love.

June brings the last day of school, but everyone feels sad because they had hoped Mr. Terupt would be back. But, he is not. Even though no one seems to know him very well or is close to him, everyone loves him. Alexia went to see Mr. Terupt last week but was told she had to come back. She feels like something is up and wonders what it is because Mrs. Williams and some of the other teachers are suddenly perky.

Danielle tells God she is mad because if he had listened to her prayers, Mr. Terupt would be here. Anna is mad at Mrs. Williams because she seems so happy while all the students feel terrible. Jeffrey wants to yell at Mrs. Williams because she does not understand how the students feel. Jessica has fought back tears all day but now they stream down her face because Mr. Terupt has arrived. All the students hug him and say they love him, and he says he loves them too, then he sees Peter, who has not taken



part in the hug, and walks over to him and says he forgives him. Mrs. Williams announces that their class has been chosen to “loop,” or move ahead to the next grade along with their teacher. That teacher will be Mr. Terupt. Everyone thanks her and she says that there is magic in the room when he is there. After things calm down, Alexia tells Mr. Terupt that she has been being nice and he says she has always been nice but now has figured out how to show it. Now she cannot wait until next year. Jeffrey thinks that sometimes school can be great and next year will be great because Mr. Terupt is back. He tried to help Michael but he died, and he wonders if the things he did – getting help when Mr. Terupt fell in the snow, getting the nurse to call 911 – helped Mr. Terupt. Jeffrey is slowly getting his mom and dad back and hopes things get better between them. He thinks the reason for all of this is that it prompted him to break the silence between him and his parents, so he is happy.

As Anna is heading for her bus, she finds that her mother and Charlie have come to pick her up. Then she sees Danielle’s mother in the lobby and when Danielle arrives, Anna’s mother introduces herself and invites Danielle and her mother over to their house. Danielle’s mother introduces herself and says they will come. During this exchange, Mr. Terupt comes into the lobby and gives Danielle and Anna a thumbs-up sign, and Anna wonders if he knows the whole story. Jessica no longer longs for California or her father, but for another year with Mr. Terupt. She has read many books but thinks theirs – her classmates and Mr. Terupt – is a great story and thinks he would agree. Luke is happy that they will be sixth graders and Mr. Terupt will be his teacher, and he agrees with Mrs. Williams that there will be magic. The book ends with Luke realizing that Terupt is a Dollar Word.

Analysis

The issue of blame comes to a sort of resolution in the book's final chapters. Jessica's mother finally says what some of the students have been thinking -- that Mr. Terupt had a role in what happened to him by not exerting a stronger hand over the class when misbehavior started to happen. She is saying that Mr. Terupt, despite all his excellent points and the positive influence he has over the children, is not a perfect person. His intentions were good; he maintained a hands-off policy in the hope that the children would learn to take responsibility for their own actions but in the process he forgot that they are just children and sometimes need for an adult to take control. Ironically, it was as he was stepping up to intervene in the incident on the snow pile that he was injured, but his injury served to teach important lessons and give the students life lessons they would not have had otherwise.

The book's last two chapters are about healing. Mr. Terupt is eventually healed of his injuries and returns to school. Jeffrey's mother has begun to heal from her grief over Michael's death, having gotten out of bed and gotten dressed for the first time, and she is beginning to act as a parent to her remaining son again. The rift between Danielle's family and Anna's begins to heal both through the renewed friendship between Charlie and Terri, and through Anna's subtle signal -- asking to pray with Danielle and her mother -- that Terri is a good person and should be given a chance. That olive branch is



accepted in the final chapter as Danielle's mother accepts an invitation to Terri's house, signifying that her heart is beginning to open up and she will accept the friendship between Danielle and Anna. The rift among the girls has healed as a result of Alexia's improved behavior and honesty. Finally, Mr. Terupt gives the students a lesson in healing by forgiving Peter for his role in the accident, not only exonerating Peter but also demonstrating responsible behavior by his own actions. As the book ends, the students have another opportunity to learn from Mr. Terupt and demonstrate what they have already gained when he is assigned to their class the following school year.

Discussion Question 1

What do the students learn about Mr. Terupt while they are in the waiting room during his surgery? Why might this be significant?

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of the microphone Jeffrey brings to the hospital? What role does it play in helping the students heal?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the concept of blame and fault in this novel. Why do the students think it is important to assess blame for what happened to Mr. Terupt? How do they resolve the issue in the end? Whom, if anyone, do you think is to blame?

Vocabulary

Concerned, testament, technically, arrangements, provide, candidate, complications, layout, cinch, hyperventilate, guarantee, monitor, anticlimactic, accustomed, devastating, reluctantly, intervene, restate, redundant, encompass, drastically.

Characters

Mr. Terupt

The book's titular character, Mr. Terupt, is a fifth grade teacher at Snow Hill School in Connecticut. The story takes place during his first year of teaching at the school and he is an immediate hit with the students. He captivates them with creative projects that engage even the least interested of them and his handling of classroom mischief also wins him points with his pupils. His personal life is mysterious -- he is single and therefore an attractive candidate for Anna, who hopes to match him up with one of the single female teachers -- but it is only after his accident that his students learn that he apparently is alone, with no one visiting him at the hospital and no family photos on his desk at school. Although his hands-off method of discipline is partially to blame for the accident that puts him into a coma, the magic he brings to the classroom has a positive impact on each of his students.

Peter

Peter is a fifth grade student at Snow Hill School. He is the class clown and prides himself on being funny, often playing pranks on fellow students, some of which backfire. He is immediately drawn to Mr. Terupt because he seems to let him get away with a lot, but is devastated when a snowball he throws puts his teacher into a coma. Eventually, he earns the forgiveness of Mr. Terupt and his fellow students, and earns redemption for himself.

Jessica

Jessica is a girl who has just moved from California to Connecticut and enters Mr. Terupt's fifth grade class. Her mother moved to the East Coast after Jessica's father left them for another woman and Jessica is hurt that he has apparently abandoned her as well as her mother. She struggles with the usual issues faced by the new kid in school, including who to trust among the girls in her class.

Luke

Luke is the smart kid in the fifth grade. He studies hard and prides himself on making good grades, and he wholeheartedly embraces Mr. Terupt's Dollar Word game, continuing it long after the class project is finished.



Alexia

Alexia, also called Lexie, is the cool girl in the class. She wears flashy clothes and assumes that all the boys are attracted to her. She is also the class troublemaker, setting up conflicts among her fellow students, particularly the girls, in order to ensure that she is the leader.

Danielle

Danielle lives on a farm with her conservative, Christian family, including her narrow-minded grandmother. She is not truly fat, but heavy enough to attract jibes from Alexia, and she struggles to stand up to her family when they disapprove of her friend Anna.

Jeffrey

Jeffrey is the dark character in the book. His parents had him in order to use his stem cells and later bone marrow in an attempt to save the life of his brother Michael, who later died anyway, leaving the parents devastated and Jeffrey wondering if he is to blame.

Anna

Anna is the product of her mother's teenage pregnancy, an event that led her mother's parents and friends to ostracize her. Her family situation is also an impediment to her friendship with Danielle, whose family thinks she and her mother will be a bad influence.

James

James is an autistic boy who has a profound influence on Mr. Terupt's students when they begin visiting the school's special needs classroom.

Mrs. Williams

Mrs. Williams is the school principal.



Symbols and Symbolism

Bathroom Pass

In the book's first chapter, Peter overuses the classroom's bathroom pass in order to get out of class and goof off. Mr. Terupt soon catches on and gently teases him while getting his point across. The pass is a symbol of Peter's attempt to test the new teacher and Mr. Terupt's ability to catch on and handle the matter in a way that enables Peter to save face.

Dollar Words

Mr. Terupt engages the class with a math game in which each letter of the alphabet is assigned a value and students get points for finding words that add up to 100 or one dollar. The game is an example of his creative teaching methods and is woven throughout the book as each of Luke's chapters notes any dollar word used.

Girl War

Early in the book, Alexia is depicted as being a troublemaker who schemes to pit various friends against each other, resulting in a girl war that tests their friendships.

Bean Plants

One of Mr. Terupt's projects involves growing bean plants from seeds, then allowing each team of students to feed their plants whatever they choose. The plants are symbols of the students' ability to work together successfully and in particular, the relationship between Anna and Danielle.

Collaborative Classroom

The Collaborative Classroom is where the school's special needs students are taught. The members of Mr. Terupt's class are deeply affected by their interactions with the students there.

Snowball

During a friendly game that goes wrong, Peter throws an icy snowball, hitting Mr. Terupt in a vulnerable part of his head and causing him to lapse into a coma.



Microphone

During class meetings, Mr. Terupt passes around a fake microphone and students are able to speak out only when they have the mike. Later in the hospital, the students use the mike as a way to express their feelings about Mr. Terupt and what he means to them.

The Summer of the Swans

The Summer of the Swans is a book about a boy with Down syndrome and his relationship with his sister. It is the tool Mr. Terupt uses to get his students involved with the kids in the Collaborative Classroom.

Paper Chain

A chain of paper rings is used to mark the class' progress toward earning a free day. Luke's anger when Peter correctly guesses the number of links in the chain leads to his involvement in the snowball incident.

Charlie's Truck

Danielle's brother Charlie drives a truck with a dent in the side of it. When Anna's mother recognizes the truck, the incident opens up a dialogue with her daughter about her teenage pregnancy and the resulting fallout with her family and friends.

Settings

Snow Hill School

Most of the book takes place at Snow Hill School in Connecticut. Various scenes are set in Mr. Terupt's fifth grade classroom, the Collaborative Classroom for special needs students and the soccer field outside.

Hospital

Many of Mr. Terupt's students visit his hospital room in the weeks following his accident, and students, parents and teachers gather in the waiting room while he is in surgery.

Jeffrey's Home

Jeffrey lives with his parents, who have been devastated by the death of their older son Michael. One scene in the book takes place in their home when Jeffrey works up the courage to approach them and try to end their silent suffering.

Anna's Home

Anna invites Jessica and Danielle to her home on a couple of occasions, leading to brief scenes that take place there.

Danielle's Home

A few brief scenes take place at the farm home Danielle shares with her extended family.



Themes and Motifs

Personal Responsibility

One of the overarching themes of *Because of Mr. Terupt* is that of personal responsibility. From the beginning of the story, Mr. Terupt adopts a style of teaching that tries to help each student realize the ramifications of their actions and accept responsibility for what they do. He does not punish Peter for the mischief he creates in the classroom but subtly lets him know that his actions have been noticed. Eventually, he is forced to chastise Alexia for her treatment of her fellow students but does not punish her for her behavior, instead choosing to try to help her learn on her own.

After the accident, each of the students ponders who was to blame and feel it is important to assess fault for what happened. While everyone agrees that it was Peter who actually threw the snowball, several of the others know that they, too, played a role in what happened -- Jessica hatched the plan, Luke took part because he was angry at Peter, and even Mrs. Williams is targeted for giving the students permission to play in the snow.

In the end, the children learn that Mr. Terupt's method of teaching personal responsibility was partially to blame for what happened, but they grow as a result. Alexia learns to take responsibility for her actions toward her fellow students and be herself rather than trying to manipulate others in order to be in control. Jeffrey learns that it is possible for him to take responsibility for helping his family begin to heal from Michael's death rather than waiting for his grieving parents to step up. Each character, including adults like Danielle's mother and brother, experience personal growth as a result of Mr. Terupt's positive influence.

Coming of Age

A coming of age novel is one in which a character undergoes significant growth and development in the course of the story. In the case of *Because of Mr. Terupt*, a number of characters experience personal growth and achieve a new degree of maturity.

When the book opens, Peter is the class clown and proud of that role. His goal is to see exactly how much he can get away with, particularly with a new teacher, but he soon learns that Mr. Terupt has a subtle way of commanding respect. Through his role in causing the accident and the forgiveness he later gains from both Mr. Terupt and his fellow students, he gains a new sense of maturity and responsibility.

Jeffrey begins as the novel's darkest character, having been deeply affected by his family life. He is keenly aware that his parents conceived him only as a resource for saving the life of his older brother through donations of his stem cells and bone marrow, and he feels he is a failure because his brother died anyway, leaving his parents devastated and remote. Through the insights he gains from Mr. Terupt and his fellow



students, Jeffrey is able to assume the role of parent in his household, reassuring his mother and father that they are not to blame for Michael's death and beginning to heal his broken family.

In the same manner, each of the fifth graders experiences personal growth as a result of their experiences with Mr. Terupt, and his influence also prompts growth in some of the more mature characters. Most significantly, Danielle's brother and mother begin to open their hearts to Anna and her mother and as the book ends, there are hopeful signs that their personal evolution will continue.

Everything Happens for a Reason

After Mr. Terupt's accident, several of the characters spend time pondering what happened, believing that everything happens for a reason. On the surface, it does not seem possible that there could be reason for such a tragic event and even Danielle, who has a deep religious faith, expresses anger at God even as she prays for a good outcome.

However, as events unfold, the students gradually become aware of the profound influence their teacher has over their lives although he remains in a coma. Their reactions to his situation and their reflections of the roles they played cause them to see things in a different light. Alexia realizes that she might not have changed her rude, manipulative behavior and Jeffrey might not have found the courage to approach his parents about Michael's death. The girls in the class might not have found their way back to genuine friendship and Danielle's family might not have begun to open their hearts and minds to Anna and her mother. Anna and Jessica both open dialogues with their mothers about their family situations and Peter learns that the school's special needs students are not so different from him and his friends. By the time the book concludes, essentially every character has found some good that has come from a tragic situation and everyone has learned from it.

Styles

Point of View

The book is somewhat unusual in that it is written in the first person, but from the point of view of several characters. Each chapter is told by one of seven students in Mr. Terupt's class -- Peter, Anna, Alexia, Jeffrey, Jessica, Luke and Danielle. Each student relates the events that occur in the plot from his or her own perspective, so several events are recounted more than once but from the perspective of different narrators. As a result, the narrator's voice is a bit different with each student, reflecting his or her unique speaking style and personality.

Language and Meaning

Since the book is narrated by a group of fifth grade students, the language is on that grade level and changes with each narrator. For example, Luke is the intellectual of the group, so the vocabulary used in his chapters is more challenging than in some of the others and the topics he discusses sometimes involve academic pursuits rather than strictly the events that take place in the novel. Alexia, on the other hand, over-uses the word "like" -- "Like, Peter knew what he was doing out there on that soccer field -- hitting me with that Frisbee. So, like, I was constantly reminding him that he had killed our plant." Danielle is very religious, so her chapters frequently end with a prayer and Jessica's father directs plays so all of her chapters are set up in the form of a play that progresses along with the plot.

The plot moves evenly through the ten months of the school year and is easy to follow for the most part. The February chapter is something of an exception because the author does not explicitly say what happened to Mr. Terupt but leaves the reader to draw conclusions based on the various students' reactions to the snowball incident, leading into the March section in which the situation becomes more clear.

Structure

The book is divided into two parts. Part One includes chapters September, October, November, December, January and February, encompassing the events that occur up to and through the snowball incident that injures Mr. Terupt, while Book Two includes March, April, May and June, the events that occur after the accident. Each chapter is further divided into sub-chapters, each of which is narrated by one of the seven students who make up the book's primary characters.

The sub-chapters vary in length but none is more than three or four pages. The accident itself plays out in a series of very brief chapters -- only a sentence or two each -- in which the students offer their initial reactions as the event is taking place and immediately thereafter.



Quotes

It's our bad luck to have teachers in this world, but since we're stuck with them, the best we can do is hope to get a brand-new one instead of a mean old fart.

-- Peter (September: Peter paragraph 1)

Importance: This establishes the fact that the book will involve a new teacher, and it establishes Peter's irreverent personality.

Then recess ended. That's how I got the girl war started.

-- Alexia (September: Alexia paragraph 5)

Importance: This establishes the fact that Alexia purposely stirred up trouble between the various girls in her class in order to ensure that she remained its leader.

I think the fire marshal was just mad about our false alarm, and I think Terupt knew that, too. He wasn't gonna get pushed around. Our hard work mattered to Terupt -- even mine. I owed him now. I had to try, even if only a little.

-- Jeffrey (October: Jeffrey paragraph 7)

Importance: This establishes the fact that Mr. Terupt is beginning to have a positive effect on his students, even through their observations of his interactions with others.

Maybe if things had turned out differently that day, they would have turned out differently in the end, too. I think what happened on the soccer field just set us up for disaster later on.

-- Luke (November: Luke paragraph 2)

Importance: The author uses this opportunity to foreshadow events to come and gives the reader a hint to pay attention to what happens next. It also foreshadows how the snowball incident will eventually play out.

They reminded me of Michael. Just like the Collaborative kids, Michael had the power to make you feel really good whenever you were with him. Love poured from him.

-- Jeffrey (November: Jeffrey paragraph 1)

Importance: This is the first mention of Jeffrey's brother Michael and the importance he played in Jeffrey's life, as well as the reason Jeffrey relates so well to the Collaborative students.

I do like going to the Collaborative Classroom. I don't have to worry about things down there. The kids in that room love you no matter what.

-- Alexia (November: Alexia paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote begins to set up the insecurities that drive Alexia to cause conflict among her classmates in order to build herself up.



It didn't matter that what I said was a lie. They ditched her and became my friends instead. Just like that, I became a leader. All of a sudden I was getting all kinds of attention, unlike at home.

-- Alexia (November: Alexia paragraph 10)

Importance: This passage explains more fully how Alexia came to be the troublemaker she has become and establishes the fact that her home life is partially to blame.

My brother's name was Michael. The football cards were his. He was older than me. He had Down syndrome and leukemia, and was real sick, so my parents had me in order to save him.

-- Jeffrey (November: Jeffrey paragraph 2)

Importance: This passage explains why Jeffrey feels responsible for his brother's death and sets up the relationship of trust that is evolving between him and Jessica.

How could he have let this happen? Why did he put so much trust in us? He should have learned from my plant concoction. He knew it probably wasn't a good idea, but he let me do it anyway. Just like he knew our rough play outside probably wasn't a good idea, but he let it go again. He should have yelled at us. He should have yelled at Peter for the Frisbee. He should have yelled at him for the puddle of water. He should have yelled so that we knew he was serious -- then this never would have happened. He should have stopped us. Now he was going to die.

-- Luke (March: Luke paragraph 5)

Importance: The very characteristics that made Mr. Terupt so popular among the students are now being seen as the reason for his downfall.

My jaw dropped. What was going on? How did Mom know that?

-- Anna (March: Anna paragraph 13)

Importance: Her mother's recognition of Charlie's truck and her knowledge of the dent in its side eventually opens the door for Anna to talk with her mother about her past and whether Anna herself is to blame for the fact that she is ostracized by her family and old friends.

The power of Mr. Terupt, even in his coma, made something huge transpire.

-- Jessica (March: Jessica paragraph 9)

Importance: This is one of a number of instances in which Mr. Terupt's influence over his students extends beyond his specific acts and beyond the classroom to inspire them to be better people.

James walked over to Peter and gave him a hug that shattered (dollar word) his shield. Everybody stopped and watched. This was the first time any of us had really looked at Peter since the accident. We had each made the choice to make him invisible. But now we saw him.



-- Luke (April: Luke paragraph 2)

Importance: When Mr. Terupt announced the partnership with the Collaborative Classroom, Peter called the special needs students retards, but now it is one of those students who is the first to reach out to Peter after the accident.

It's not your fault, either," Dad said, before I was gone. I heard his voice breaking up as he said it. I felt that good feeling again, and thought of Terupt.

-- Jeffrey/his father (April: Jeffrey paragraph 7)

Importance: In this passage, Jeffrey's father finally says the words he has needed to hear since his brother's death, making it clear that he was not to blame. It also establishes another example of Mr. Terupt's influence over his students.

I'm sorry," I said as I looked around at everyone. I'm sorry you're here because of me.

-- Peter (May: Peter paragraph 1)

Importance: Here Peter takes responsibility for his role in the accident and begins the healing process with his fellow students.

All those instances with Peter earlier on this year, and with Luke's plant concoction, and all the other mischief," Mom paused. "I think Mr. Terupt handled them the way he did because he was trying to teach you guys some personal responsibility." The light turned and om pushed the gas. "But that's what cost him in the end. He let you play rough that day in the snow and hoped you wouldn't cross the line -- but he made it your responsibility not to cross the line because he didn't intervene.

-- Jessica's mother (May: Jessica paragraph 2)

Importance: Jessica's mother outlines Mr. Terupt's role in the accident in order to explain that blame can be spread around in such situations. While Jessica hatched the plan, the other students participated and Peter threw the snowball, Mr. Terupt's method of handling his students played a role also by giving them more responsibility than they were equipped to handle.

Mr. Terupt stood up and walked over to Peter. We watched, and he taught us like he did every day we were with him. He showed us how to forgive.

-- Jessica (June: Jessica paragraph 2)

Importance: This passage sums up Mr. Terupt's ability to teach his students not just through his words and through his creative class projects but by his own example.