

The Brave Study Guide

The Brave by Robert Lipsyte

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Plot Summary

The Brave by Robert Lipsyte tells the story of Sonny, a half-white, half-Indian 17-year-old boy with a talent for boxing. Dissatisfied with his life on the Reservation, he heads off to the big city to join the army. Before he can sign up, he is targeted by drug traffickers who reel him into their cause. When he is busted, Sonny is faced with a choice regarding his future. He discovers that boxing goes far beyond the ring.

Sonny has real talent in the ring, but when he fights, he feels a monster rising up within him. It makes him want to lash out and crush the other opponent without thought. His great uncle, Jake, feels as if Sonny has great potential for harnessing the monster, which he calls the hawk. He wants Sonny to continue in Indian tradition by becoming a Running Brave. The Running Braves were men who were specially trained to stand up for and protect members of the Moscondaga tribe. Sonny doesn't want to have anything to do with that.

He decides to join the Army, and he heads to New York City to find his mother so she can sign the papers that will allow him to join the Army since he is under age. Fresh off the bus, he is targeted by a drug dealer who wants to use him as a runner. In his naivety, Sonny doesn't realize what is going on and allows the dealer to befriend him. He is arrested on his very first run.

While in prison, Sonny begins to connect with his heritage. He is beaten up then released into the care of a police officer who works with Jake to train the boy for the ring. During this period of training, Sonny learns to work hard both in the ring and out of it. He also has the opportunity to re-evaluate his life situation and learn how to exercise his mind as well as his body so that he can tap into the strength of the monster when it arises.

Martin is a boy Sonny's age whose job it is to help Sonny with his training. At first they don't get along, but Martin has a great respect for Jake, and eventually the two become good friends. They decide to take on the amateur circuit since that is the easiest way to the top. However, circumstances force Sonny to go immediately into the professional circuit, which is much more difficult. With the support of Jake, the police officer, Martin, and Martin's family, Sonny is up to facing the challenge. While this is all happening, Brooks, the police officer who has become like a father to Sonny, continues to fight to get drugs off the street. Sonny is faced with a decision in regards to who his friends truly are. He also has to come to terms with the idea of what is right and wrong out on the streets as well as in the ring.



Chapters 1-6

Chapters 1-6 Summary

The Brave by Robert Lipsyte tells the story of Sonny, a half-white, half-Indian 17-year-old boy with a talent for boxing. Dissatisfied with his life on the Reservation, he heads off to the big city to join the army. Before he can sign up, he is targeted by drug traffickers who reel him into their cause. When he is busted, Sonny is faced with a choice regarding his future. He discovers that boxing goes far beyond the ring.

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He decides to join the Army, and he heads to New York City to find his mother so she can sign the papers that will allow him to join the Army since he is under age. Fresh off the bus, he is targeted by a drug dealer who wants to use him as a runner. In his naivety, Sonny doesn't realize what is going on and allows the dealer to befriend him. He is arrested on his very first run.

While in prison, Sonny begins to connect with his heritage. He is beaten up then released into the care of a police officer who works with Jake to train the boy for the ring. During this period of training, Sonny learns to work hard both in the ring and out of it. He also has the opportunity to re-evaluate his life situation and learn how to exercise his mind as well as his body so that he can tap into the strength of the monster when it arises.

Martin is a boy Sonny's age whose job it is to help Sonny with his training. At first they don't get along, but Martin has a great respect for Jake, and eventually the two become good friends. They decide to take on the amateur circuit since that is the easiest way to the top. However, circumstances force Sonny to go immediately into the professional circuit, which is much more difficult. With the support of Jake, the police officer, Martin, and Martin's family, Sonny is up to facing the challenge. While this is all happening, Brooks, the police officer who has become like a father to Sonny, continues to fight to get drugs off the street. Sonny is faced with a decision in regards to who his friends truly are. He also has to come to terms with the idea of what is right and wrong out on the streets as well as in the ring.

Chapters 1-6 Analysis

Chapter 1



In the first chapter, the reader is introduced to Sonny Bear. It's obvious that he has a passion for boxing, that he comes from a Reservation, and he is not a crowd favorite. He is good at what he does, but he lets his emotions take control. His lack of control comes back against him. He deals with prejudice, and he is quick to try to place blame on the prejudice, but Jake won't let him settle the blame on others. Jake points out that it's up to him to do things right. In this chapter, the reader understands that Sonny is a mixed blood white boy who doesn't identify with either part of his heritage.

Chapter 2

Sonny wanted to get away from life on the Reservation. He thought about the warriors of his past and identified with them as his senses sharpened in preparation for his leaving. Even though he identified with them, he was quick to brush aside his connection to them. This is consistent with the lack of connection he has shown for his Indian heritage. Jake was there for him in his fights, and he is there for him again as Sonny tries to leave. He doesn't agree with what Sonny is doing, but he still helps the boy. As Sonny gets on the bus to leave, the driver tells him not to bring alcohol on the bus. This shows some of the stereotyping and prejudice Sonny is used to dealing with in his regular life. As Chapter 2 ends, the reader sees a different side of Sonny. The reader already knows that he is a fighter, and now they also see him as an artist. However, he tries to hide his art.

Chapter 3

As Sonny steps off the bus, he fights back panic. This does not make him want to turn around and go back to the Reservation. Instead, he braces himself for the new situation and moves forward. Although he is large and tough in the ring, he is naïve and fresh bait for the city teens. Sonny doesn't trust the boy that he meets very much, but he is drawn in by the girl. In the ring he can't control the monster, and the same thing happens in his street reality when he feels as if he has to protect the girl. He lets the monster take control, and he lashes out against a police officer.

Chapter 4

Sonny finds himself surrounded by police officers, and he discovers he is missing his wallet. Although he knows his new friends had turned on him, he is reluctant to turn them in. He has already formed a strong attachment for the girl and wants to protect her. Sergeant Brooks is a tough character who is open to talking with him. Sonny doesn't want any favors, however, and he continues to let the monster take over. Brooks doesn't want to play his game and lets him go.

Chapter 5

Doll didn't come in to help them, but she is there waiting for him when he gets out. She introduces him to the scene on The Deuce. In Chub's restaurant, Sonny identifies people as crack dealers and feels unsafe. This is ironic since he had already hooked up with drug dealers, but that didn't seem to faze him. He finds out that Doll is a young mother, but instead of turning him off, it makes him feel even more attracted to her. He



is in the city to look for his own mother who leaves him regularly, so this might be some of the attraction Doll holds for him. She is dedicated to her child. Doll knows the scene, and she knows how to survive. She gets Sonny involved with a drug run almost immediately, acting as his agent.

Chapter 6

Still feeling nervous and unsettled, Sonny refuses to back down and go back to the Reservation. He now has a mission, and he gets on the bus to go to New Jersey to drop off strokes. He notices some unusual things that make him feel on edge, but he talks himself out of his paranoia. He should have listened to his gut. Instead of everything being fine, he finds himself under arrest.



Chapter 7-12

Chapter 7-12 Summary

Chapter 7

Brooks sounds disgusted as he accuses Sonny of carrying crack. Sonny remains silent. Brooks tells him that people like him are considered mules - people with no brains and also with no future. He gives Sonny a lesson on what crack does to people - even little children. Stick is part of an uptown dope posse called the X-men. They are known for shipping crack to middle schools in New Jersey. They sucker Sonny right into their scene.

Now Sonny is charged with a felony. Brooks offers to let him go with a bus ticket out of town if he will give a statement, but Sonny keeps quiet. Sonny tries not to show any fear. Brooks tells him he will be waiting a long time for a trial while Stick continues selling death to children. Sonny is all right with turning Stick in, but he is worried about Doll. As Brooks continues talking to him, he feels the monster rise again.

Brooks sees his anger and challenges him to stand up and box. He takes Sonny's handcuffs off. Sonny tries to strike him, but the man is too quick. Finally, he throws a chair at the police officer, who dodges it. Sonny still refuses to talk, and Brooks tells another officer to take him away.

Chapter 8

Sonny feels like a helpless child again as he is processed for prison. His lawyer has already figured out a lot about him. After discussion with the D.A. , they determine that Sonny will go to Whitmore Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility. After the prisoners shower, they are sent to a room for haircuts. Sonny refuses to have his cut, saying it is part of his heritage. They try to do it anyway, and the monster rises up. Sonny knocks the officer flat.

Chapter 9

While Sonny is in solitary confinement for knocking down the officer, he thinks about Jake's stories of the Running Brave's solo. He wonders if he had wanted to be a Running Brave then mentally scoffs at the idea. Sonny sits in his cell and sketches onto the Styrofoam tray from his meals. He uses the plastic tip on the drawstring of his pants as a drawing utensil. Brooks comes to visit him, telling him that he had talked to Jake. They have arranged his release into general population.

Brooks asks Sonny to join the X-Men. Sonny wasn't so sure about that. He tells Brooks he won't narc for him. Brooks tells Sonny that he knows he was on the bus because Stick has betrayed him. When Sonny tells Brooks he can't trust him, Brooks reminds him that he doesn't have a choice.



When Sonny is released, the others cheer. They think he is a hero for standing up to the officer. The other young men ask about his heritage, and he is warned that he will have to choose to join the X-Men or the Latin Knights. After the others fell asleep, Sonny goes to the latrine. Five X-Men come after him, encouraging him to join them. He tells them he is a member of the Moscondaga Nation and will only answer to Chiefs and Clan Mothers. They attack him, and the last thing he sees is his blood spreading over the floor.

Chapter 10

Sonny is dreaming that he is walking on the wind. He sees a Running Brave below him, and the courier tells him that he is going to be okay. The voice comes on a hawk's wings. In actuality, Sonny is in a bed, hooked to machines. He hears Jake commenting that he can't make Sonny stay on the Reservation. Brooks is there, also. He says that Sonny will be dead meat if he is left loose in the city. Jake suggests that they find Sonny's mother so that she can sign the papers for the Army, but Brooks said it won't matter since the Army won't take him until his indictment is dropped. That could take a long time. Jake dreams that he flies out the door onto The Deuce where he sees Doll, but she has his mother's face.

Sonny suddenly awakens, screaming out in pain. He feels a pinprick of pain in his arm, then he is sleeping again. Jake is talking with Brooks about boxing, and Jake feels that he is safe. Jake is telling Brooks how Sonny is a very quiet kid, but every once in a while he would suddenly lash out. He calls it an evil spirit. He also calls it a hawk. Jake is telling Brooks that Sonny's father was a white man who was killed in Vietnam.

A doctor comes in and tells Sonny how lucky he is since the knife had come very close to his heart. He needs to walk, and Sonny is amazed at the amount of pain he is in. Walking is tough, but he does it. Now he needs to get his strength back. Brooks says he will be up and running in 10 days, and he tells the doctor that Sonny is now his prisoner. While Sonny is healing, he receives a card from Heather. One time Brooks comes in, exhausted. He had been on a stakeout, trying to get Stick. He tells Sonny why he is so determined to get Stick. His best friend had died from a drug overdose.

Jake, Brooks, and Sonny are watching a prizefight on TV. Brooks tells the others he used to train at Donatelli's Gym. This is where Sonny had been going to train. The two men inform Sonny of their plan to get him trained properly.

Sonny goes home to the Reservation with Jake to heal. He tells the boy to try to dream about hawks at night because they will give him a vision. Jake tells Sonny the history behind the Running Braves and why the Government had tried to split them up. He tells Sonny that he knows the secrets of the Running Braves and would pass the information on to him.

Chapter 11

A pounding noise wakes Sonny up. He can still see the moonlight, and his body is wracked with pain. Jake tells him to kick a stick, trying to teach him about balance,



footwork, and concentration. Sonny thinks it's dumb, but he tries. Jake gives him some tea to hold in his mouth while he kicks the stick so he can learn to breathe through his nose. They do other strange exercises, which Sonny thinks are ridiculous, but he does them. The monster rises up within him, and he tries to swallow it down. Jake points out that he has to exercise his mind as well as his body. He reminds Sonny that he has a chance to learn how to box and become a real fighter. However, his white side wars with his Indian side, pulling out the worst in each. Jake tells him he has to take the best of both sides. They go back inside for breakfast, and the two set up a plan to continue training every day.

Chapter 12

The first week of training is very painful, and it seems to pass in the blur. They realize that people are starting to watch what they are doing. During the day, Sonny helps Jake work in the junkyard. At night, Jake massages Sonny's muscles and tells him stories about the Nation. Sometimes they watch video cassettes of fights, analyzing the moves. Jake says that Mohammed Ali was a great fighter, but it is hard to learn boxing from him since he had his own special way. He talks with Sonny about how Mohammed Ali was given a hard time by the whites, but he stood up for what he thought was right. One day Sonny wakes up and realizes that something is different. He isn't in pain anymore. It gives him hope that he can get in shape. He looks forward to going back to the city. Brooks will be there, and so will Doll.

As Sonny's body became stronger, he wonders if he will be strong enough to keep the monster in its place. Jake talks with him more about the Running Braves, and he tells Sonny that there will be big trouble ahead someday. When they return to the house, there is a limo parked outside their door. It is Sonny's mother.

Chapter 7-12 Analysis

Chapter 7

Sonny is back facing Brooks once again. This time, he is in even more trouble than before. Brooks fills him in on the drug scene, and tells him how he was set up, but Sonny still refuses to give information on Stick. Brooks gives him an opportunity to go home, but Sonny doesn't feel as if he has a home to go to. Brooks challenges him, and he tries to lash out at the man, but the man is too quick and agile for him. He still refuses to talk even though it means that he is going to be in serious trouble.

Chapter 8

Sonny is on his own. His lawyer tries to use his nationality to get him a break, but the DA doesn't go for it. He is sentenced to a Juvenile center with a bunch of other boys. Even though he never really cared about his nationality before, he suddenly decides to identify with his heritage by refusing to get his hair cut. An officer tries to make him cut his hair, and he lashes out, letting the monster take control of him once again.



Chapter 9

His behavior leads him to solitary confinement. This is the first time he has been alone in a long time, and he has plenty of opportunity to think. Sonny remembers the stories Jake told him, and for the first time finds himself really thinking about the Running Braves and their stories. This makes him think about his situation more seriously. Brooks comes to visit him and offers him another deal, trying to get an inside scoop on the drug ring. When Sonny gets out of solitary confinement, he is a hero. For once, instead of being an outcast it seems cool to be in Indian. Everyone wants to know about his background. When members of the X-Men try to get him to join them, he stands up to them. For the first time, he identifies with his own heritage, telling them that he will not join them. He will only respond and listen to members of his tribe. This doesn't go over well, and he is beaten up.

Chapter 10

Sonny is unconscious and has dreams. Jake and Brooks appear in his dreams, and they are a source of comfort. In reality, Brooks and Jake are now teaming up together to plan his future. They both know that he has talent in the ring, and this may be his way to salvation. When Sonny gets up and has to start walking again, he finds himself inspired by Brooks. Still, even in his protected environment, he is lured to the street by Doll. She sends him a card, re-establishing their connection to each other.

As he heals, Sonny learns more about Brooks. He is given a wake-up call as to the horrors of what drugs can do to a person. He also learns that Brooks had been involved with the boxing world in his past. Both his mentors point out to Sonny that what he really has to work on is control. At the end of this chapter, Brooks squeezes Sonny's shoulder in the first friendly physical gesture of their time together. The reader has now seen Brooks and Sonny's relationship progress from cop and deviant to motivator to friendship. Back at the Reservation, Jake still tries to inspire Sonny with stories of the Running Braves.

Chapter 11

Training with Jake is brutal, and Sonny frequently finds himself embarrassed. The old man doesn't care who is watching what they do. He is focused on helping Sonny control his body and mind.

Chapter 12

To Sonny's surprise, the hard work began to pay off. He found himself more open to Jake's ideas and history lessons. Right when he began to get used to his new world and insights, his mother showed up.



Chapter 13-18

Chapter 13-18 Summary

Chapter 13

Both Sonny and his mother are surprised when they really look at each other. He had forgotten how beautiful she is, and she is amazed at how much harder he looks. She tells him that she has wonderful news. They have a great place to go to in Phoenix. She is going to sell her art there, calling it authentic Indian art. Jake asks her how long she is going to take the boy this time, and she responds that it is for good. He says he has heard that before.

Sonny tells his mother that he wants to stay with Jake and that he is training to be a fighter. His mother does not want him to do that. Jake knows that she has the right to take the boy away, and he takes Sonny inside and tells him it is time to go to Donatelli's gym. He hands Sonny some money and tells him to take the truck. Jake reminds him not to forget that he is one of the People.

Chapter 14

Sonny arrives at the gym close to midnight. Brooks is there waiting for him. Jake had called him. Brooks tells Sonny how he had come up the same stairs 20 years before. He encourages Sonny to use the fire inside him for good instead of bad and tells him that he is going to work hard now. He will run every morning and train every afternoon. He will pay for his keep by working around the gym. Mr. Donatelli has a special system for training boxers, and Sonny will work hard to train. Sonny is supposed to remain in the gym at all times except when he is running. Brooks doesn't want him spotted by the X-Men. He tells Sonny that if he goes back to The Deuce, he can't come back. Sonny agrees.

Chapter 15

Henry Johnson lectures Sonny on the importance of the training in the gymnasium. He tells the boy it is not a therapy group. Henry shows some of the basics of boxing practice, and he tells Sonny his partner, Martin Witherspoon, will be coming in later.

Martin is not enthusiastic. He is supposed to be calling out commands, but he does so without energy. It slows Sonny down. The days are long and hard. Sonny likes to think while he is running, and he wonders about Doll and how she is doing. He is happy for his mother, but he knows that she would never understand his lifestyle and his own choices. This is his chance to be somebody.

The real fighters come in to train in the late morning. One man named Dave Reynolds even brings his own disc jockey. Nobody pays any attention to Sonny. The young man watches the others as they train and tries to pick up some pointers. He observes the



fact that they are very serious workers. After school, Martin comes to work with Sonny, and it is so depressing working with him that Sonny wouldn't even mind if the sessions were cut short. He wishes that Brooks would come by, and at times he is very tempted to go back to visit The Deuce to see how Doll is doing.

Chapter 16

Jake shows up at the gym one day and starts offering advice to Sonny. Martin is very impressed with the man and his Indian ways. It inspires Martin to do a better job, and Sonny picks up on his training. Jake and Sonny go out for dinner, and Jake tells him that his mother has been calling. She doesn't like the fact that Sonny is in the city by himself. She wants him out there with her. She tells him that he has to make a choice. Jake also tells Sonny that Heather has called twice. Sonny tells him that she is somebody from high school.

After dinner, Jake tells Sonny that he should let Martin help him. He also says that at one point he had been worried about Sonny, but now he knows that the boy is going to be fine. Sonny realizes he doesn't want his great uncle to leave, and they hug for the first time since Jake was young. When he gets back to the gym, Brooks calls him. He tells Sonny that he will try to come visit him soon, but it is very busy at work right at that point. Brooks fills him in on some of the gym history, telling him that Martin's father used to be a fighter, but he got hurt.

As Sonny is falling asleep that night, he thinks about Heather's phone calls and wonders how she had gotten his phone number. He realizes that she must have his wallet. Sonny also realizes that there is a good chance that she has his sketchbook as well, and he doesn't want her looking at his pictures.

Training with Martin is very different after Jake's visit. Martin is inspired, and his father helps him work out combinations. Some of the fighters came over to watch. Sonny challenges the Postman to a fight, but the man says that he doesn't like amateurs. Sonny feels the monster stirring, and Johnson supports the idea of a fight. They get into the ring, and Sonny soundly defeats the Postman.

Chapter 17

Sonny is having dinner at Martin's home with his family. Martin's mother is remembering 20 years before when they were eating with Brooks before a fight. That night is Sonny's first fight. Martin joins Sonny for a walk, and Martin tells Sonny that his sister is attracted to him. He asks if Sonny has a girlfriend. This makes Sonny think of Doll. Sonny finds himself telling Martin about the Running Braves, but then he stops himself. Martin understands, knowing that he has to concentrate on the fight.

While they are talking, Martin tells Sonny that he knows that Brooks thinks highly of Sonny. He understands that Sonny has real potential as a fighter, but it is really up to him. Martin begins writing up late plans. He says that his father was always putting him down, and he had hated the gym before Sonny came around. Sonny reminds him that it is because Jake came around.



Sonny is ready for the fight. He listens to Johnson's instructions and waits for his moment. The monster taunts him, trying to get him to ignore the advice Johnson gave him, but Sonny doesn't listen to the monster. The crowd jeers, and Sonny's opponents become angry and messy. Sonny wins the match. Brooks is there watching the fight, and he comes over to congratulate Sonny, calling him by name.

Chapter 18

Sonny looks at his next opponent, Delgado, and determines a strategy for fighting him. The monster tries to get him on another track, but he doesn't listen. All his running has kept him in shape, and although Delgado is stronger than he, he is also weak in his legs. Sonny dances around until Delgado is exhausted then fights hard and wins. After the fight, they have a party at Martin's house, and they toast Sonny as the "future heavyweight champion of the world." Brooks has to leave to go back to work, and Sonny uses the phone to call Jake. The older man tells Sonny that he will be there at his fight the next Friday.

Some of the fighters taunt Sonny. He finds himself having to control the monster more frequently. With control, he beats them. One opponent uses his long arms to trap Sonny. Johnson tells him that it is good for him to learn different styles of fighting. When Jake goes back to Sonny's dressing room, he finds an envelope with a plane ticket in it. Sonny's mother wants him to fly out to Phoenix. He tells Jake that he has to stay and fight, and Jake shrugs and tells him that he is starting to look like a Brave.

Chapter 13-18 Analysis

Chapter 13

His mother hadn't been there for him in the city, but now, when he is starting to gain control of himself and has a plan for his future, she comes in ready to whisk him away to a life that she deems better for him. Jake really knows him, and helps him once again. When circumstances put him in a tight situation, Sonny has to run off to New York City. This time, he isn't trying to his escape the Reservation. He is just ready to embrace his future.

Chapter 14

Sonny leaves Jake, one of his strongest supporters, and shows up at the gym in New York where he is met by his other strongest supporter, Brooks. It isn't going to be easy, and Sonny is told that he is going to have to work very hard to achieve his goal, but Brooks has faith in him as a contender.

Chapter 15

Living and working in the gym isn't a fast road to the easy life. Sonny has to work very hard, and he also has to work with people he doesn't appreciate. The time he appreciates the most is his time in the outdoors, where he is able to run. Although it is



never pointed out, the reader might find a connection with this appreciation of nature in him and the appreciation of nature found in the Running Braves. Sonny keeps to himself, and silently observes what others are doing.

Chapter 16

Sonny doesn't appreciate his Indian heritage, but his new training friend apparently does. He is completely in awe of Jake. He asks Sonny questions about his heritage, and his naivety for the Indian culture is similar to Sonny's naivety regarding the drug culture. Still, Martin's questions are not offensive, and he helps Sonny see Jake and his past in a different light.

When Jake leaves, Sonny finds that he is missing the man from whom he had been trying to run away. Jake's visit brings new energy to Sonny's training. Martin is more interested in helping him, and the two begin working as a formidable team. For the first time, others in the gym begin to see Sonny's talent and realize that he might be up to fighting with the pros.

Chapter 17

In Chapter 17, Sonny was appreciating his time with Martin's family. It was a scene he was not familiar with, and he appreciated it. His first fight went well, and for the first time, he was able to control himself and suppressed the monster. It led him to victory.

Chapter 18

Brooks supported Sonny during the fight, and Sonny's perspective on the monster began to change. He started to feel as if they were wings were rustling inside him. This is symbolic of the hawk that Jake always said resided within him. He was gaining strength as a controlled fighter, but had a long way to work before he got to the top. He had to learn to take control of the monster and use it as a positive energy in his own fighting. When he did this, he was proud of himself and wanted to share the moment with Brooks, but Brooks was gone. He had to go back to a stakeout, fighting his own battle against drug. His ring was the street. Brook's disappearance showed that Sonny was up to doing the right thing in his own fights, on his own.



Chapters 19-24

Chapters 19-24 Summary

Chapter 19

Brooks and Johnson push through people, making a pathway for Sonny to walk through on his way to his fight. Reporters are asking him questions about Indian rights, and Brooks defends him saying that he is there to fight, not to discuss politics. They brush up on the rules, and Brooks gives Sonny a pep talk. They discuss fighting strategies, and Sonny goes out to fight. The monster arises, whispering that Sonny should hit his opponent a lot. He does so, and his opponent strikes back, battering him back against the ring ropes. Through all the noise, Sonny hears Doll call his name. He knows he has to fight back.

Sonny rises up, realizing that he is the monster, and it is up to him to control himself. He has to tame the monster and make it work for him. Using lessons learned from previous fights, he goes back after his opponent. He controls himself and the ring, winning the match.

Chapter 20

It seems as if everybody wants to know about him and his past. They are curious about the Reservation and his name. Sonny learns that Hubbard had beaten Brooks during Brooks' last fight 20 years prior. Sonny will be fighting Hubbard's son for the Gotham Gloves title. The press is excited about this, calling it the quarter-century grudge match. As they pose for pictures, Hubbard whispers to Sonny that he should never pass up publicity.

As he leaves the locker room, Sonny finds Doll. He tells her that he heard her. Stick is there as well. Brooks sees him and tells Stick to stay away from Sonny. He says that they are there to watch the fight, and Doll invites Sonny out to celebrate with them. Brooks says he has something else to do, and Doll challenges Sonny. He has to make a choice, and he chooses to go with Brooks.

Chapter 21

Sonny is cranky and tired all week. He trains hard, impressing everyone. He is trying not to think about Doll. Jake had stayed for a few days, then he had gone back to the Reservation. Brooks can't visit because he is very close to breaking his case. Martin invites him to stay with his family for the last two nights before the fight. While they are at Martin's house, the entire family watches fights on the VCR. His journey begins to seem real to him.

The night before the flight, Martin finds Sonny drawing. He can't believe how good Sonny is. They talk a bit about Sonny's mother and about Doll. They also talk about the



hawk. The phone rings, and it is a message that Brooks has been shot. They have to get to the hospital quickly because it is very bad. At the hospital, Mrs. Brooks tells Sonny that Brooks wants to see him. He tells Sonny to win.

Chapter 22

They aren't allowed in the dressing room at the competition. Johnson checks into it and learns that Sonny has been disqualified because he had been in pro fights upstate. He had never thought to tell Henry Johnson about the fights because they had been so small. However, he had been paid, so they still count. He is not allowed to fight as an amateur anymore. Together, they decide that they will do it the hard way; they will just have to fight Pro.

Chapter 23

Sonny is on his way to The Deuce. Martin tries to come with him, and he tells Martin to get out of the truck. His friend won't listen. Martin keeps asking questions, wondering if Stick shot Brooks. Sonny tells Martin to reach deep into truck's dashboard. His friend finds an old Colt .45. Sonny takes the gun and tells Martin to make sure that the truck gets back to Jake no matter what happens. He goes into Chub's pizza, but ignores the man behind the counter. Martin follows him. He goes into the back, telling Chub that Stick called them regarding an emergency. He finds Stick, Doll, and a baby. It is Jessie. Although Sonny is attracted to Doll, he pushes those feelings back. Sonny tells Stick that he has come to kill him. Stick tells him that it was either Brooks or himself. Sonny accuses Stick of turning him in for commission. Stick denies it.

As they talk, Stick does admit to setting him up with the drugs. The monster arises, and Sonny still wants to kill Stick. Martin tells him not to do it. Stick tells Sonny that Brooks just wants him to be a rat for him, and Martin reminds him that Brooks and Jake want him to be a fighter - a Running Brave. Sonny struggles to regain control of himself. He realizes that it isn't a monster inside him but a hawk. It breaks free, and he is in control. He decides to take Stick in. Stick doesn't think Doll will let him, but she is more interested in protecting her baby.

Chub tries to stand up for stick, but when he sees that Sonny has a gun, he backs down. They drive to the hospital.

Chapter 24

Sonny enters the Hillcrest Lodge, and it is smaller than he remembered. He is used to playing on a different level now. Martin and Johnson tell him to stick and run the early rounds. He shouldn't head-hunt. Sonny forces himself to think about the fight and not about Brooks, lying in the hospital. The man will never walk again. The crowd wants to see some real action, but Sonny ignores them. He is going to play smart. Martin calls out the plays, and Sonny concentrates on maintaining control without getting mad. He wins the match easily. When his win is announced, he is called The Tomahawk Kid.



Chapters 19-24 Analysis

Chapter 19

Instead of being an outcast, Sonny is starting to get a good name for himself. He has fans trying to get his autograph. Reporters want to learn about his Indian heritage. Instead of being a negative thing, it is starting to work in his favor. Even though he is defeating his opponents on a regular basis, he still has many things to learn. Instead of getting angry, he is open to the new lessons. When he finds himself in a tight spot, he realizes that he is the monster, and it is up to himself to gain control. Jake had been telling him that all along, but now he is realizing it on his own. He ignores the crowds and uses his brain in the ring, and it makes him a formidable opponent.

Chapter 20

As the reporters interview him about his own successes, the spotlight was brought onto Brooks and his past. As Sonny is reveling in the high of his success, he comes face to face with his own past from the street. Doll and Stick invite him out with them, and he is offered a choice between his two worlds. Although he is still attracted to Doll, he makes his choice and chooses his future with Brooks and boxing.

Chapter 21

The decision is difficult for him, and he is out-of-sorts for the week following his choice. Martin's family supports him, and he is able to talk with his new friend a bit about some of the things he has kept hidden in his life such as his drawing and his attraction to Doll. His two worlds collide once again when he learns that Brooks has been shot. Even though the man was gravely injured, he is calling for Sonny, showing the bond between the two. He is encouraging Sonny to win.

Chapter 22

Sonny doesn't have a chance to win for Brooks. He is barred from the fight. He decides to take action, thinking that Stick has turned him in. Sonny shows the same tenacity he did at the beginning of the book when he had gone forward to hunt Stick down even when the odds had been against him.

Chapter 23

Sonny is furious, and he goes to The Deuce for revenge. He is put in a position where he can choose to yield to temptation with Doll, but he is able to maintain his focus mentally. He is also on the verge of killing Stick in his anger, but once again, he is able to harness his anger and control himself. Instead of killing the boy, he takes him to the hospital. For the first time, he identifies with the Running Braves. Sonny pulls from all the lessons that he had learned on his own personal journey to do the right thing. He is ready to move on, doing the right thing.

Chapter 24

Sonny has come full cycle. Now, back at the place he started, he is a new man. He is a fighter with control who is proud of his heritage. He is truly ready to embrace the future and succeed, embracing the warrior, the Running Brave, within him.



Characters

Sonny Bear

Sonny, whose real name is George Harrison Bayer, is a 17 year-old boy with an Indian mother and a white father. His father died during the Vietnam War, and his mother is forever searching for a good home for them so Jake spends much of his youth traveling around the country. When his mother needs to go out on her own, he lives on the Reservation with his great uncle, Jake. Sonny is very talented in boxing, but he has a hard time controlling himself in the ring. He feels torn between his white background and his Indian background, focusing on the worst of each of them. His great uncle thinks he has potential, and works hard to help Sonny find himself. The boy goes out on his own to escape the Reservation life, but he is naïve, and quickly falls in with the wrong crowd. After some hard experiences, he learns to focus on control, and learns how to fight professionally, taming the monster that is in him and using it for good.

Jake

Jake is Sonny's great uncle. Sonny's mother is his favorite niece, and he becomes a father figure to the boy at the Reservation. He knows the history of his people, and he is dedicated to bringing up Sonny as a Running Brave. The secrets of these protectors had been passed down to his father and then to him, and he is determined to pass them on to Sonny, who he believes has great potential. He works at a junkyard during the day, but as Martin points out, he is a very wise man. He is also very patient and understanding with Sonny. He is sad when the boy leaves the Reservation, but he lets him go, and even offers him a ride. He is always there to support Sonny, going down to the city and visiting him when he has fights and when he is in trouble.

Doll

Doll's real name is Heather. She is a young mother who helps lure Sonny into life on The Deuce.

Stick

Stick meets Sonny right when he gets off the bus. He is a drug runner who sends drugs to Middle School children in New Jersey.

Alfred Brooks

Alfred Brooks is a police officer who lets Sonny go even after Sonny punches him and messes up a drug bust. He becomes a friend and father figure to Sonny.



Jessie

This character is the daughter of the young mother on The Deuce. Her mother loves and protects her.

Chub

Chub is Doll's friend. He offers to watch her daughter for her. He owns the pizza place.

Martin Witherspoon

Martin Witherspoon is Sonny's partner at the gym. He wants to be a writer, and he is in awe of Jake.

Denise

Denise is Martin's sister. She has the warms for Sonny according to Martin.

The Postman

The Postman is a strong fighter at the gym. Sonny beats him in one of his earliest great victories.

Running Brave

Jake encourages Sonny to become a Running Brave. It's a special person who trains body and mind to best protect his people.



Objects/Places

Moscondaga Reservation

Jake lives on the Moscondaga Reservation. Sonny also lives there when his mother doesn't have him out on the road. He wants to leave the place at the beginning of the book.

The Deuce

The Deuce is another name for 42nd Street. It is where Stick lives.

Bus

Sonny takes a bus to New York City. It's also where he is arrested for trafficking drugs.

Whitmore Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility

Whitmore Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility is where Sonny has to spend time for carrying the drugs.

Phoenix

Sonny's mother goes to live in Phoenix after she leaves New York City. She wants her son to move there with her.

Solitary

Sonny is sent to solitary after he attacks a guard. He really begins thinking about his heritage while he is there

Hospital

Brooks is taken to the hospital after he is shot by Stick.

Martin's House

Sonny goes to Martin's House before his first fight. He feels very safe and comfortable there.



Chub's

Chub's is a pizza joint where Doll takes Sonny. There are illegal activities going on in the back.

Donatelli's Gym

Sonny trains at Donatelli's Gym. He also lives there and pays his rent by keeping the place clean.

Hillcrest Lodge

Hillcrest Lodge is a small place where Sonny goes to fight. He is a victor there at the end of the book.



Themes

Finding an Identity

Throughout the book, Sonny is trying to figure out who he is. As Jake once points out, the boy seems to harness the worst from his Indian side and the worst from his white side. Jake encourages Sonny to focus on pulling out the best from each of the races in his heritage. At the beginning of the book, Sonny is doing everything he can to escape from the Reservation. Jacob wants him to become a Running Brave, and Sonny doesn't want to have anything to do with that. He knows the old man loves him, but he doesn't want to listen to him. He thinks the man is somewhat crazy.

Sonny is a fighter, and he also has a gift for drawing. He loves to draw, but he doesn't want others to know about this talent. It is a source of embarrassment to him. When he finally does come to terms with the fact that he is an artist as well as a fighter, it is when he is surrounded by close friends that he feels safe. Even though he can accept the artistic side of himself, and he realizes that it is an inheritance from his artist mother, he still prefers to embrace the fighting part of his personality. He finds his identity in this fighting side - but it is a harnessed identity, focused on the good like a true Running Brave as Jake has trained him to be.

Excelling in Boxing

Sonny has a real gift for boxing. He is powerful, and he is smart. He also has a passion for the sport. What he doesn't have is control. When he starts to fight, he gets angry, feeling what he calls the monster rise up in him. The monster entices him to lash out and use his brute strength to batter his opponent, but this doesn't always work.

Sonny learns that he has to spend time strengthening his body and working on his agility. He has to learn to identify his emotions and control them. Watching videos of fights helps him learn strategies, and Sonny also watches the pros train at the gym. In his own matches, he fights others with different styles and talents. He learns from them and uses these strategies to his own advantage in his fights.

He can't do it alone, and Sonny realizes that he has to listen to Johnson, Jake, and Brooks for guidance. He also has to work closely with Martin to develop fighting strategies. When he puts all of his lessons and experiences together, he becomes a formidable opponent in the ring.

Fighting Against Drugs

Sonny doesn't do drugs himself, and he is pretty naive when it comes to the drug culture. This is shown clearly when he gets to the city and Stick and Doll befriend him. He looks around and identifies others as drug users or dealers, but doesn't seem to

suspect his new friends and their involvement with the drugs. Even after he finds out about what they do, the seriousness of their situation doesn't affect him negatively. He is offered money to transport drugs, and he is just happy for the cash.

Later, after he gets to know Brooks, he starts to understand why drugs are so bad. When he learns that Brooks' best friend died from drugs, and he learns that Stick is basically selling death to Middle School children, Sonny begins to think more about the seriousness of the drugs. Still, he doesn't want to turn in Stick or Doll - that is until the battle against drugs leaves Brooks in the hospital unable to walk.

Style

Point of View

This novel is written in both third person objective and in first person from Sonny's point of view. It offers insight into his thoughts and reactions to situations as well as his feelings and beliefs. The third person and first-person sections flow seamlessly from one to the other so the reader gets a well rounded-picture of each scenario. For example, in the opening of the book, the author writes in third person as Sonny enters the ring for a fight. During the third person narration in the first paragraph, Sonny interjects his thoughts regarding the situation. After two sentences in first person, the writing goes back to third person, detailing the events.

Because it is written in both third and first person, the reader gets to see the large picture of what is going on in Sonny's life and around him. The reader also get to see how Sonny is reacting to everything that is going on in his life, adding a personal connection to the reading.

Setting

The Brave takes place in two main areas, the Reservation in upstate New York and in New York City. This is important because it shows the contrast between two very different worlds. Sonny, a boy of mixed blood himself, is constantly fighting to balance the white world with the Indian world. For a period of time, he doesn't want to claim either side as his own. By the end of the book, he has to embrace both sides.

The book begins on the Reservation, and he takes his journey to New York City. He learns about the battles on the street as well as the battles in the ring. The street and the ring are very similar in regards to facing difficult opponents and learning how to control a situation to survive.

By the end of the book, the boy has come to terms with who he is as a person, and he comes full circle, back to his roots at the Reservation. This time, however, instead of fighting as an uncontrolled, unpopular novice, he fights as a champion who recognizes his own heritage.

Language and Meaning

One of the greatest strengths of this book is its use of language. The author uses strong verbs, propelling the action forward. Each main character has a unique voice. When the announcers talk, you feel as if you are at the ring. You read boxing terminology and understand it thanks to context, even if you are unfamiliar with the sport and its terms.



The kids from The Deuce use street talk, but as part of their interplay with each other, Doll interprets all the words from the street that Stick uses so Sonny can understand them. This also helps the reader understand what is going on. Jake is true to his character of bringing the lessons of the Running Braves through to his great nephew. He is the one with the stories and the talk about the hawk. Brooks is serious, yet compassionate. He uses the perfect linguistically balanced verbiage of a police man, a fatherly figure, and a fighter. Martin's verbiage is that of a typical teen. For example, when he tells Sonny that his sister is attracted to him, he says, "Denise got the warms for you."

Structure

The Brave by Robert Lipsyte consists of 24 chapters, each labeled by number. The story is followed by a section that highlights the author and a list of other books by the author. This is followed by credits, a copyright, and a section about the publisher.

The book has one main plot wherein Sonny goes on his journey to becoming a professional boxer. There is also a sub plot. In the subplot, Brooks is trying to take down Stick and his drug ring.



Quotes

"It's not quitting if you don't have a chance in the first place."

The Brave

"I'm an Indian up here, but when the chiefs sit in the Long House and tell their secrets, I'm just a mixed-blood white boy."

The Brave

"They ain't our teachers. We're our teachers."

The Brave

"He never blacked out. He swam through tunnels of darkness and pools of light."

The Brave

"Stick sells death to kids. How you justify that?"

The Brave

"Why am I trancing out on the bedtime stories of a misfit Moscondaga?"

The Brave

"He had never had a friend like James. To see him die after all they went through together."

The Brave

"They got control of themselves."

'I could try.'

Brooks said, 'We'll see.'"

The Brave

"Government men figured the Running Braves died with my grandfather. They didn't know he told me all the secrets. And I been telling you."

The Brave

"Jake grinned. 'Let 'em think I'm just a crazy old Redskin hearing footprints.'"

The Brave

"Ready to climb to the top of the highest mountain of Moscondaga with a hundred pounds of stones on my back, and stay there alone with the snakes and the wolves and the mountain lions, and the scariest creatures of all, the dark shapes of the future that lurk in the corners of my mind."

The Brave

"Would he become strong enough to keep the monster in its place?"

The Brave



"Mr. Donatelli sat in this chair and looked right inside me and figured I'd never be much of a boxer, but if he gave me a chance to train here, I might be able to beat the streets, be a contender."

The Brave

"When a Running Brave chops wood, he thinks about the tree and the axe, not the fire he's gonna make."

The Brave

"Started you boxing to get that Hawk out."

The Brave

"Boxing is merely chess with blood."

The Brave

"Can't judge a man's wisdom by how he makes his living," said Spoon."

The Brave

"I'm the monster, thought Sonny. It's me."

The Brave

Topics for Discussion

What was Sonny's heritage, and how did he feel about it?

Explain what a Running Brave is.

Explain why the Government got rid of the Running Braves according to Jake.

Compare and contrast the monster and the hawk.

What made Sonny such a good boxer?

What was Sonny's weakness in the ring? How did he overcome this weakness?

Describe the relationship between Sonny and Martin, including how the relationship evolved.