

Cujo Study Guide

Cujo by Stephen King

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Cujo Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Pages 1-32.....	6
Pages 32-60.....	9
Pages 61-96.....	12
Pages 97-124.....	14
Pages 125-152.....	16
Pages 153-183.....	18
Pages 184-212.....	20
Pages 212-256.....	22
Pages 256-304.....	24
Characters.....	26
Objects/Places.....	30
Themes.....	33
Style.....	35
Quotes.....	38
Topics for Discussion.....	39



Plot Summary

Cujo is a novel by bestselling horror author Stephen King. Cujo is a family dog who is bitten by a rabid bat. Cujo's illness goes unnoticed by his owners, who are embroiled in their own drama, allowing the illness to progress to the point that Cujo turns from a gentle, loving dog into a horrifying killer. At the height of Cujo's illness, a woman brings her child to Cujo's home, which happens to also be the location of a remote car repair shop, and where she finds herself stranded in a no longer functioning vehicle. Cujo is a fairy tale for adults, one with so many unthinkable but altogether possible coincidences, which will give any parent enough nightmares to last a lifetime.

Tad Trenton thinks there is a monster in his closet. Despite the reassuring words of his parents, Tad is certain that a monster with red eyes is hiding in the closet. The only thing that allows Tad to sleep peacefully through the night are the Monster Words, a litany that Tad's father has created to keep monsters away.

Donna and Vic Trenton, Tad's parents, have not been getting along. Vic is afraid his wife has a lover. In truth, Donna has been having an affair with a local man, Steve Kemp, but she has recently ended it. Unfortunately, Donna's lover is not happy with the end of their relationship and he has written a note for Vic making it clear that there was an affair.

Vic and his partner, Roger, are struggling to keep their advertising business, AdWorx, from going under. Their largest client, Sharp Cereals, has recently had a public debacle when a bad batch of food dye in their newest cereal caused a number of children to appear to be bleeding internally. This debacle is made worse by the fact that AdWorx's most popular commercial for Sharp Cereal is an ad in which a man, the Cereal Professor, tells viewers that there is nothing wrong with the cereal. Now, in the midst of this scandal, Vic and Roger think they are going to lose this client and cause them to lose the majority of their income. Roger has decided they should go on a two week long trip to gather the information they need to create a new campaign that will repair the damage. This trip happens to come four days after Vic learns of his wife's affair.

Donna's blue Pinto is having carburetor trouble. Once, a year ago, Vic took his car to Joe Camber, a local mechanic with a place in the more rural area of Castle Rock, and was happy with his service. Vic wants Donna to take the Pinto to Camber, but forgets to make the arrangements before he leaves. Donna is left to decide if she should drive the car to the next town and hope it does not seize up before she reaches it, or take it to Camber's even though she cannot reach him by phone.

Donna cannot reach Joe Camber by phone because he is dead. Camber's dog was bitten by a rabid bat several days before and has developed rabies without anyone in the Camber family noticing. The family has had its own drama. Charity Camber, Joe's wife, won a small sum of money in the lottery and has used it to convince Joe to allow her to take her son to visit her sister in Connecticut. Joe agrees because the trip would mean he could go to Boston with his drinking buddy, Gary Pervier, to see a baseball game and visit some places of ill repute. Joe drives his wife and son to the bus station,



then returns home to finish up his work only to find himself worrying about the dog. Joe goes down to Gary's to ask his opinion on who he might get to watch the dog. However, Joe finds Gary dead. Joe goes into the kitchen to call the police, unaware that the dog has been sleeping in the basement. The dog finds Joe and kills him, too.

Donna plans to leave her son with a babysitter and take the car to Camber's for repairs. However, Tad has a nightmare and talks his mother into allowing him to go with her. Donna and Tad take a few snacks and drive the car to Camber's. The car makes it, without incident, until they reach Town Road No. 3 where the Camber garage is located. Donna nurses the car up the road and is pulling into Camber's driveway when the car quits. Donna gets out to look for Joe when Cujo appears. Donna recognizes immediately that Cujo is rabid. Donna jumps back into the car and tries to start it, but the car will not start.

Donna reassures Tad and tells him they should wait for the car's engine to cool before they try to go again. However, when Donna tries the car again, it starts for only a moment and then quits. Donna tries again and again to start the car, but the battery begins to fail. Donna then honks the horn repetitively, hoping to get the attention of the Camber's one neighbor, unaware that that neighbor is Gary Pervier and that he is dead.

Out of options, Donna and Tad wait out the night in the car. The following day, Donna waits for the mailman to come, thinking that he can rescue them when he comes with the Camber's mail. However, Joe Camber called the post office and requested his mail be held for a few days. Toward the end of the day, when it is obvious there will be no one coming to their aid, Donna focuses on the porch door. Donna believes she can make it to the door before the dog, but she is afraid it will be locked and that the dog will get her before she can get inside. Donna is frightened what will happen to Tad in that circumstance.

Toward the end of the second day, Donna decides she has to try to reach the porch door because Tad is becoming ill from dehydration. While Tad is sleeping peacefully, Donna opens the door, testing it. The door is badly dented from Cujo ramming into it repetitively, so Donna is concerned that it might not shut again. Donna closes the door, testing it. When Cujo does not appear in response to the noise, Donna becomes confident that he has wandered off or died. Donna steps out of the car and tosses some stones over the front of the car where she last saw Cujo. When nothing happens, Donna starts around the car. Cujo suddenly appears from the front of the car and charges Donna. Donna manages to get back in the car, but the dog follows. Cujo bites at Donna's belly and leg, leaving massive wounds in Donna's thigh before she is able to get it out of the car.

Vic tries to call home that night and is mildly concerned when Donna does not answer. Vic continues to call one on the hour until midnight. Now Vic is frightened that something bad has happened. Vic calls the police and has them check the house. The police call back and tell Vic that someone has broken in and vandalized the house. Vic rushes home, convinced that Donna's lover, Kemp, has kidnapped her and their son. Although the DA's investigator is confused by Donna's missing car, he also focuses on



Kemp. While the DA's investigator and the state police officer go to talk to Kemp after his arrest, the sheriff goes out to check if Donna left her car at Camber's as Vic suggested she might have. When the sheriff arrives, he not only finds Donna and Tad, but he also finds Cujo. Cujo attacks the sheriff, killing him.

Tad is having convulsions and Donna is frightened for his life. Donna climbs out of the car and grabs a broken bat that has been lying on the side of the driveway. Donna attacks Cujo, beating him until the dog finally stops attacking her. Donna then continues to beat the dog. In the meantime, Vic has driven up to Camber's in search of his wife and he drives into the yard as Donna continues to beat the dead dog. Vic pulls Tad out of the car, only to find that he has been dead for some time. Donna cannot believe what Vic has told her and she performs CPR on Tad's body. When the police come, Donna has to be sedated and forcefully removed from her child's body.

Vic and Roger retain the Sharp account, but Vic cannot concentrate on work. Donna survives her injuries, but spends more than a month in the hospital. When she comes home, Donna is overwhelmed with guilt. Vic, too, suffers guilt, wondering what might have happened had he gotten to Camber's sooner. Charity and Brett Camber return to Castle Rock and decide to keep their farm despite a lack of a sizeable income. Six months after Cujo's death, Charity gives her son a new puppy.

Pages 1-32

Pages 1-32 Summary

Cujo is the third story by Stephen King that is set in the fictional town of Castle Rock. King reaches back to the first book set in Castle Rock, *Dead Zone*, for a source of evil that once lived in Castle Rock, the serial killer Frank Dodd. King begins his novel with mention of Dodd, using him to explain how monsters never really die.

Tad Trenton wakes in the middle of the night to use the bathroom and comes back to bed to find a monster peering at him from his closet. Tad screams for his parents, who come and offer him words of comfort. The father looks in the closet and sees a stack of blankets and a teddy bear that most likely created the shape that Tad saw as a monster. Tad's father moves the blankets deeper into the closet and closes the door, moving a chair in front of it. However, as soon as his parents leave, the closet door opens again and Tad hears a voice that is similar to that of Frank Dodd's.

The oldest living person in Castle Rock is Aunt Evvie. George Meara hates delivering the mail to Aunt Evvie because she always wants to talk. The problem is, Aunt Evvie is deaf and she screams as though she believes everyone else is deaf too. However, Aunt Evvie can predict the weather accurately. The spring of 1980, Aunt Evvie predicts it is going to be the hottest summer in Castle Rock history.

The year before, when Vic Trenton was having trouble with a bearing in the wheel of his Jaguar, George Meara recommended it take it to Joe Camber. Vic and his family went to Camber's, a remote farm at the end of Town Road No. 3, where they discovered Joe has a Saint Bernard that weighs more than two hundred pounds but is as gentle as a kitten. Tad, just three then, played with the dog while Joe fixed Vic's car. Joe was in fact an excellent mechanic and he repaired the bearing right on the spot for just ten bucks.

In Iowa City, Iowa, just three days after George's conversation with Aunt Evvie, a little girl named Marcy becomes ill with what her mother assumed was the same stomach flu her brother had a few days before. However, when Marcy's mother goes into the bathroom to help her daughter, she discovers that her daughter's vomit is filled with blood.

In mid June, Cujo, the Camber's dog, is chasing a rabbit. Cujo knows he is too old to be chasing rabbits, but it is a nice day and it's fun. The rabbit, however, catches scent of Cujo and disappears in a hole in the ground. The hole is actually the opening to a natural cave under a field on the Camber's property. Cujo gets his head and shoulders stuck in the hole as he tries to reach the rabbit. Some bats, awakened by the noise, try to escape the cave but find the entrance blocked. One attacks Cujo, biting his nose. Cujo backs out of the hole and runs to the lake to wash off his sore nose.



A week later, Vic and his partner, Roger, meet in a restaurant to discuss the Red Razberry Zingers debacle. Sharp Cereal, the manufacturers of Red Razberry Zingers, is Vic and Roger's biggest client for their advertising company, AdWorx. Red Razberry Zingers was released only a few months ago, advertised by a campaign Vic and Roger designed in which a man they call the Sharp Cereal Professor tastes the cereal on camera and says, "Nope, nothing wrong here" (pg. 27). One batch of the cereal was released with a badly manufactured batch of food dye, causing those who ate it to be unable to process the dye. Therefore, the customers' intestines would appear blood red, as would anything that came out of it. Although it was a temporary and harmless situation, it is bad press for Sharp Cereal and could lead to them firing AdWorx as their advertising agency. Since Sharp is the biggest client AdWorx has, losing them could mean losing everything. Roger wants to go on a marathon business trip to come up with an ad campaign that will convince Sharp to stick with them. Vic, who feels as though he is needed at home due to a suspicion that his wife might be cheating, reluctantly agrees.

Pages 1-32 Analysis

The early part of the book introduces the main characters and the situation that will lead to the ultimate climax of the novel. Tad Trenton is introduced first. Tad is a four-year-old boy who believes there is a monster in his closet. While Tad's parents react to this news the same way any other practical parent might, the author compares this monster to a serial killer who once lived in the same town as the Trentons, suggesting that some monsters never die, even when their human bodies do. This suggests to the reader that the monster in Tad's closet might be more real than the parents suspect and that it will eventually come out to get the innocent little boy.

This early part of the book also introduces Tad's parents, Donna and Vic Trenton. Donna is a housewife who is not particularly happy about living in rural Maine. This causes some tension in her marriage that her husband does not understand and cannot name. Vic Trenton is an advertising executive who took the chance to begin his own advertising company outside the mainstream. However, Vic's main client is faced with a publicity problem and Vic and his partner are concerned that they will be the only victims of the debacle. As a result, Vic and his partner are planning to be out of town for two weeks after the Fourth of July holiday. This information seems random at the moment, but will prove to play a major role in the tragic events to come in the developing plot.

Aunt Evvie is the oldest woman in Castle Rock, and her role in this novel is very small, but very important. Aunt Evvie is an annoying woman, but she is good at predicting the weather. Aunt Evvie predicts that the weather this summer will be extremely hot. This is important, but again the reader is not sure why that is at this point in the novel.

Finally, Cujo, the big kind dog belonging to mechanic Joe Camber, has been bitten by a bat. This too seems like a random event, though the reader does feel a great deal of compassion for this dog who is gentle enough to allow a three-year-old Tad Trenton ride

on his back. This event will prove to be one of the most important events of the novel, however. The reader who is aware of the probability that a bat might carry rabies will understand the importance of this event, especially as the plot continues to develop.



Pages 32-60

Pages 32-60 Summary

Gary Pervier, a war hero turned alcoholic, is sitting in his front yard as he does most days, drinking the day away. Gary was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in World War II, but he had the medal melted down into an ashtray in 1968. Gary blames the military for getting him addicted to drugs during treatment for a war wound, creating the alcoholic he is today. Gary is the Camber's only neighbor on Town Road No. 3 and a drinking buddy of Joe's. Therefore, when Cujo comes by his yard, Gary is prepared with a pocketful of treats. However, this time Cujo is not interested in eating, something that is highly unusual for the more than two hundred pound dog. Gary is worried for a moment, but then Cujo finishes the treats.

Donna Trenton returns home from dropping her son at day camp and finds her lover, Steve Kemp, waiting in the living room. Donna is annoyed and lets it show. In fact, Donna has decided to end the relationship and she tells that to Kemp. Kemp becomes angry, threatening to rape Donna where she stands in the kitchen. Donna stands her ground, calling Kemp's bluff. Angry and humiliated, Kemp leaves. Donna cleans up some milk Kemp caused to spill on the floor, thinking of how the relationship started after Donna became disillusioned with her small town life after living in the hustle and bustle of New York City. Now, however, Donna regrets her actions and hopes breaking it off with Kemp will repair some of what is wrong in her life.

Charity Camber sits in her bedroom with a winning lottery ticket in her hand. Charity thinks of her boy, Brett, and of how her husband Joe is sinking deeper and deeper into alcoholism. Charity wants a different life for Brett, but she knows he admires his father and will turn out just like him sooner or later. However, Charity feels that she still has some time. Charity wants to take the money from the lottery ticket and take Brett with her to visit her sister Holly in Connecticut. Charity hopes that if Brett can see another side to life, he might aspire to something better than the dark, abusive life his father lives. The only problem is, Charity is not sure she can convince Joe to allow her to take Brett away.

Steve Kemp is angry when he returns to his shop and the small rented house behind it. Kemp goes inside to take a shower, thinking about Donna and how he had always been the one to end a relationship, not the other way around. Kemp had known Donna was about ready to end it, but he thought he could charm her into continuing it a little longer. Now Kemp is humiliated that a woman got the best of him. Out of the shower, Kemp remembers how he took one of Vic Trenton's business cards once. Kemp decides to write a note to Vic that will not leave any doubt that Donna has had an affair.

That night, Vic takes a look at Donna's car, a blue Pinto that they still have six months worth of payments to make on. The Pinto was acting up that afternoon and Vic thinks there is a sticky valve in the carburetor. Vic promises he will call Joe Camber about it



and get it fixed. Later, Vic pushes Tad on the swings for a while. Before Tad goes to bed, Vic and Tad share a drink on the porch steps. Tad tells Vic he does not want him to go out of town because his mother does not know the Monster Words. The Monster Words are an incantation of sorts that Vic wrote to make Tad feel safer in his room. Tad has slept through the night ever since Vic began saying the Monster Words. Vic promises Tad he will make a copy of the Monster Words and hang them on the wall over his bed so that Donna can say them every night. This makes Tad feel better. Vic hangs the Monster Words that night.

Pages 32-60 Analysis

Gary Pervier is Joe Camber's neighbor and friend, the first person to notice something wrong with Cujo. Gary notices that Cujo is not eating with his usual gusto. However, Gary has been an alcoholic for over thirty years; therefore, he does not investigate the situation as closely as someone else might have, and Cujo's condition continues to go unnoticed.

Vic Trenton has suspected that his wife is having an affair. The reader gets confirmation of this when Donna Trenton ends her relationship with poet, furniture refinisher, and tennis pro Steve Kemp. Donna has been unhappy with her life in Castle Rock, and her way of dealing with that happiness was to have an affair. Donna has come to see her mistake, however, and has decided to focus on her family. Unfortunately, Donna's lover is a shallow man who does not like being brushed aside by a woman. Kemp writes a note to Vic that will most likely end in a confrontation between Vic and Donna that could end their marriage. At the same time, Vic is preparing to go out of town, so the reader is left wondering what the chances are that Vic will not get the letter until he returns from his trip. It seems unlikely.

Donna's Pinto is having problems with the carburetor, so Vic has promised to have it repaired at Camber's. However, Vic is a busy man, so the reader knows there is a chance he will forget to have this done before his trip. Tad, in the meantime, is afraid for his father to leave because his father is the only one who knows how to keep the monsters in the closet. Vic has created the Monster Words, a litany that keeps the monsters from bothering Tad. Vic writes these out and leaves them on Tad's wall with the promise that his mother can read them from the list on the wall while Vic is gone. This shows the reader that Tad is still deeply afraid of monsters, but that his father, in an imaginative way, has come up with a way to keep the monsters away with the same imagination that most likely created the monster in the first place. Vic is a good father who loves his son very much.

The theme of parental love is continued with Charity Camber. Charity has won a small sum in the lottery and she wants to use it to show her son a glimpse of a better life. Charity is afraid that her son, Brett, will become the same type of alcoholic, abusive man his father is. Charity hopes that by showing him how other people live, Brett might be inspired to live his own life differently. This presents two truths to the reader. First, that Charity Camber is a loving, well-meaning mother who wants what is best for her

son. Second, that the Cambers are going out of town, reducing the chances that anyone will come to realize what it going on with Cujo before it is too late.



Pages 61-96

Pages 61-96 Summary

Steve Kemp goes to stay at the YMCA in Portland, Maine. Kemp has concluded his business in Castle Rock, sending letters to his clients informing them of how to retrieve their furniture, and he pays his rent in full.

Charity Camber asks her son, Brett, how he would like to go visit his Aunt Holly in Connecticut. Brett is excited about the idea, but is concerned that his father will not allow them to go. Charity explains that she won some money in the lottery and she wants to buy Joe something to help convince him to allow them to go. Brett suggests that she buy his father a chainfall that he has been wanting.

Vic leaves his office to get some coffee at a nearby diner. As Vic drinks his coffee, he has an idea about an ad featuring the Sharp Cereal Professor in which the Professor apologizes. Vic hopes this idea will help AdWorx keep the Sharp account.

Cujo is in the barn alone when the delivery men come with Joe's new chainfall. Charity went into town and bought the chainfall after filling out the paperwork to receive her five thousand dollar lottery winnings. The men take the chainfall into the garage and are discussing where to place it when Cujo begins to growl at them. Both men are frightened by the big dog and decide to leave before he attacks. Both think they should mention it to someone, but both forget.

Vic returns to the office and spends the afternoon going over the details of the trip with Roger. Vic then prepares to leave for the long, holiday weekend, but decides to check the mail first. There is one letter waiting for Vic on his secretary's desk. Vic takes it in his office and opens it. The letter is anonymous and contains only four lines, but those lines shatter Vic's sense of wellbeing. Now Vic knows without a doubt Donna has been having an affair. Vic drives to a local park to think things out. First Vic is angry, but then he becomes overwhelmed with fear. Vic considers taking Tad and leaving, but knows that would only hurt Tad. Instead, Vic goes home and tells Donna he knows. Donna tries to explain why she did it, that she felt old and useless, and promises that it never happened in their home. Donna also promises it is over.

Joe Camber confronts his wife and insists on knowing where the chainfall came from. Charity tells him about the lottery winnings. Charity then tells Joe that she will give him the rest of the money and allow him to take Brett hunting the following fall if he will allow her to take Brett with her to visit her sister, Holly. At first Joe refuses, threatening to beat Charity. However, an idea occurs to Joe and he changes his mind. Instead, Joe takes Charity up to bed and makes love to her.

Joe Camber goes to Gary Pervier's later that night to drink. Joe asks Gary if he would like to go to Boston with him. Joe figures if Charity and Brett can go on a little vacation,



there is nothing stopping him and Gary from going. The two men joke about the fun they are going to have. Neither notices how Cujo growls when their laughter becomes too loud.

Pages 61-96 Analysis

At the same time that Vic comes up with the idea that he hopes will save AdWorx, he learns that his wife has been having an affair. Vic is hurt and angry, but he is also frightened of his family falling apart. Vic thinks of taking off with Tad, an act that would have hurt Donna terribly and ended his marriage, but an act that would have also changed the path on which the developing plot is on. However, Vic changes his mind, losing an unknown opportunity to change the future. Now Vic and Donna's marriage is in question, but it appears both are more than willing to make it work out.

Charity Camber buys her husband Joe an expensive piece of equipment for his garage in order to bribe him into allowing her to take her son to Connecticut for a week. Joe's control over Charity is clearly overwhelming, a control that leaves her feeling the need to bribe him in order to allow her to go visit a relative. The question, however, is whether it is Charity Joe is trying to control, or if his interest is more in controlling his child. Joe is of the generation in which the son is expected to be the responsibility of the father, and a son who is too emotionally attached to the mother is someone to be ridiculed and ashamed of. This seems to support Charity's concern that Brett will grow up to be just like Joe, giving her more motive to get Brett out from under Joe's thumb for a little while and show him a world different from his father's.

When the chainfall is delivered to Camber's garage, the delivery men see Cujo and understand that he is rabid. However, neither man does anything about it. Later that night, Gary and Joe are both sitting with Cujo when he growls at their laughter, something Cujo would not normally do. Again, these men miss this unusual behavior. This is two missed opportunities, two times in which someone could have recognized Cujo's illness and done something about it.



Pages 97-124

Pages 97-124 Summary

Brett Camber wakes early on the morning he and his mother are to go on their trip, too excited to sleep. Brett takes his breakfast outside. Brett walks toward the barn in the fog and hears growling. Cujo comes out of the fog. Brett speaks to him, convinced for a moment Cujo does not know him. Cujo recognizes him and backs off. Brett is concerned, convinced Cujo is ill. However, Brett does not want to tell his father because he is afraid he will call off their trip. Brett tells his mother what he saw and she agrees that they should not tell Joe, but promises they will call him from Connecticut and ask him to see to Cujo.

Vic wakes early and has breakfast with Donna before leaving to pick up Roger. Things are still strained between Donna and Vic, have been all weekend, but they manage to have a pleasant conversation over breakfast. Tad joins them and makes Vic promise to call as often as possible while he is gone. However, Vic is worried about the cost of long distance calls, and tells Tad he will only call every other night.

Joe Camber takes his family to the bus station and passes a moment of affection with Charity in which he tells her to have a good time. Joe then takes Brett outside and tells him to be wary of the uncle he is going to visit. Joe has a low opinion of Holly's husband because he is what Joe calls a pencil pusher, someone who uses his intellect more than his hands. Joe then gives his son five dollars and wishes him a good time.

Gary Pervier is peeing in his front yard when Cujo comes across him. Cujo begins to growl, aroused by the smell of Gary. Cujo has become convinced that Gary is the reason he is ill. Gary recognizes that Cujo is rabid and he begins making his way toward the house. Cujo gives chase and bites Gary's shoulder. Gary manages to knock Cujo off and he goes into the house. However, Cujo breaks through the bottom of the screen door and attacks Gary, killing him.

On the bus, Charity watches Brett stare out the window and she treasures this moment with him, afraid of what he will become when he begins high school and his father forces him to take mechanics classes.

On the plane to Boston, Vic has a drink even though it is still early morning. Vic finds himself unable to stop thinking about Donna and her lover. However, Vic decides not to unburden himself on Roger, afraid Roger will tell his wife. Roger's wife is a well known gossip.

Joe Camber walks into his garage and discovers Cujo has excreted on the floor. Joe is angry because Cujo has never done anything like this before. Joe got Cujo in an exchange for some mechanical work and never had any trouble with him until now. When Cujo does not come to Joe's call, Joe cleans up the mess and gets to work. As he



works, Joe realizes he needs to have someone take care of Cujo while he and Gary are gone. Joe decides to go down to Gary's later and ask his opinion on who that might be. First, however, Joe calls all his clients expecting work that week and postpones.

Tad is in his room playing, thinking about his parents. Tad thinks something is wrong with his mom and dad. Tad looks at the Monster Words and decides to take them from the wall and keep them with him.

Pages 97-124 Analysis

Brett is excited about the trip he and his mother are about to take. Brett is so excited that he decides not to tell his father that Cujo is sick. This is the fourth time someone has noticed something wrong with Cujo and has either failed to notice or failed to tell someone who can do something about it. This book is filled with missed opportunities, and this is one of the biggest. Brett's reluctance is understandable, however. Brett does not realize that Cujo is rabid; he thinks the dog has simply eaten something bad. Brett is also afraid his father will cancel the trip if he knows about Cujo. This idea is an obvious one based on Joe's reluctance to let Brett go in the first place, but had Charity and Brett known about Joe's trip to Boston they might have thought differently. Unfortunately, they do not know about this trip, so once again an opportunity to stop the unfolding plot is missed.

Cujo goes over the edge not long after Brett and Charity leave. Cujo has killed Gary and will most likely kill again. The only hope in stopping him now is that someone will become aware of his condition and kill him. It would be an act of mercy, based on the horrible pain Cujo is now in.

Vic leaves town, worried that his wife might leave him while he is gone even though they appear to be getting along well when he leaves. Tad is aware of the trouble between his parents even though he has not seen them fight, leaving him more dependent than ever on the magical Monster Words his father has written for him.



Pages 125-152

Pages 125-152 Summary

Joe drives down to Gary's in his station wagon. Joe sees blood on the porch and the broken screen door. Joe enters the house cautiously and sees a shape in the hallway immediately. Joe realizes that it is Gary. Joe's first thought is his missed trip. Eventually, however, Joe realizes that it must have been Cujo. Joe goes into the kitchen to call for help, unaware that Cujo has been sleeping in the cellar. Cujo kills Joe.

Donna takes Tad grocery shopping and then they have lunch at the local pizza place. Donna expects the car to act up, but it is fine until they are driving up the hill to their house. Donna thinks she is going to have to pull over and walk the rest of the way, but the car suddenly smooths out and drives easy up into the driveway. When Vic calls, they discuss the car. Donna tells him that she tried to call Camber, but no one answered. Vic tells Donna that Joe does not have a phone in the garage, so maybe he is there but did not hear it. However, Vic suggests that Donna drive the car to the next town over and have it worked on at the Ford dealership where they bought it.

Charity and Brett arrive in Connecticut and Holly is waiting at the bus station with her two children. Holly's little boy, five-year-old Jim hits Brett in the stomach. Instead of getting mad, Brett finds it funny.

Donna decides to take the Pinto to Camber's, but wants to leave Tad with a sitter. Tad will not let her go, however, because he has had a nightmare about Frank Dodd, though he does not know his name. Tad talks Donna into taking him along. Donna fixes a few small snacks and two thermoses of milk. Donna drives the seven miles to Maple Sugar Road, worried the car will seize up at any moment. However, the car drives smoothly until about a mile before Town Road No. 3. Donna nurses the car to the turn, aware that they only have about a mile and a half to go. Donna passes a ramshackle house where there are two cars parked and nurses the car into Camber's yard. The car quits the moment they reach the driveway.

Donna gets out of the car, uneasy because of the sudden silence. Donna hears the growling before Cujo appears in the garage doorway. Donna freezes for a second, but Tad's screams bring her back to reality. Donna jumps back into the car just seconds before Cujo throws himself at the door. Donna reaches over to roll up Tad's window just as the dog appears on that side of the car. Cujo tries to get in through the window, but Donna is able to roll it up, forcing the dog to retreat. Cujo jumps on the hood and tries to get to them through the windshield. Donna honks the horn and Cujo backs off. Donna thinks of the house below them and keeps honking, hoping help will come.



Pages 125-152 Analysis

Joe Camber finds Gary dead and dies while trying to call for help. Joe's death is profound for many different reasons. First, Joe was the best chance that someone would discover Cujo's illness and do something about it. Second, Joe is the mechanic Donna, who is having trouble with her Pinto again, wants to take her car to. Third, Joe's death will end all the concerns Charity has had for her son and creates a situation in which her son can now grow to his potential and not be trapped in a poor, blue collar world.

Donna wants to leave Tad at home with a babysitter when she takes the car to Camber's because she is afraid the car will seize up and she will have to walk. However, Tad has a nightmare, so Donna decides to take him with her. This is another missed opportunity. If Donna had gone with her first instinct, Tad would not have been placed in a position of being trapped by a rabid dog and the babysitter would know Donna's location and be able to rescue her when she does not return home. However, Donna does not do this; therefore, she and Tad are stuck at Camber's without a working vehicle and with no hope that Joe Camber will show up to save her. Donna also does not know that the people in the house closest to Camber's, the ones most likely to hear her car horn, are both dead.



Pages 153-183

Pages 153-183 Summary

Vic and Roger spend the afternoon with the head of Image-Eye Studios where all their commercials were done. Rob Martin, the owner of Image-Eye Studios, also stands to lose his business if AdWorx stops using them for Sharp commercials. They discuss the situation, but none of them are optimistic about their future.

Tad pushes Donna to take him home. Donna does not want to try the engine again until it cools. Donna's attention has been directed to the porch door. Donna knows she can make it to the door before the dog, but she is concerned of what might happen if the door is locked. Donna does not want Tad to follow her or to be stranded alone in the car, so she hesitates to try. Instead, Donna tries the ignition. At first the car will not start and Donna can hear that the battery training. However, the car finally starts and Donna puts it in gear. However, the car quits before they have gone a few feet. Donna returns her attention to the porch door.

The sun goes down and Donna tries to feed Tad the snacks they packed, but he goes to sleep. As Donna eats her snack, she thinks of the package she saw on the mailbox as they turned into the driveway. It is then that Donna realizes the mailman will come tomorrow. When he does, Donna believes they will be rescued. Donna begins to drift off, thinking about the Cambers and the fact that they must have gone out for the day, but might come back soon. Tad wakes her, insisting he needs to go to the bathroom. The phone begins to ring in the house. Cujo growls at the door.

Brett is anxious to tell his dad about Cujo, but cannot get an answer on the phone. Charity assures him they will try Joe again the following day. They talk about Holly and Jim for a minute. Brett tells Charity that he dislikes Jim's attempts to show off his jukebox and that he finds it unimpressive that Jim paid so much for the jukebox but could not fix it himself.

Donna dreams and her dreams become mixed up, subconscious hopes of rescue. Donna continues to hope the Cambers will show up, but she fears they might all be dead in the barn. Donna wakes and eats the last of the cucumbers she packed. Donna feels watched. Donna turns her head and Cujo is there, watching her.

Vic is in his hotel room in Boston when he has a nightmare in which Donna and Tad are in some sort of crevasse, hiding from a medieval monster. Vic wants to call home, but it is two in the morning and he does not want to frighten Donna. Vic consoles himself with the promise that he will call in the morning. However, when morning arrives, Vic forgets.

In Connecticut, Charity wakes before dawn and hears Brett going downstairs. Charity realizes that Brett is sleepwalking. Charity watches as Brett mimes feeding Cujo, saying



something about Cujo not being hungry anymore. Charity is frightened by this scene even though Brett returns to bed and seems unaffected later that morning.

Pages 153-183 Analysis

Donna tries to get the car running enough to coast down the road, but the car will not start long enough to move more than a few feet. It is clear the car is not going to be a mode of escape. Donna focuses on the porch door, but she is afraid the door is locked. Not only this, but Donna worries about what will happen to Tad if he follows her, or if she is killed by the dog. This keeps Donna in the car where she hopes either the Cambers or the mailman will come and rescue them. In the meantime, Donna eats most of the snacks she and Tad have brought in anticipation of being rescued first thing in the morning at the latest. At the same time, Donna begins to wonder if Cujo is not possessed by some sort of monster, like the one in Tad's closet. Donna tries to stay rational, but this is difficult with a rabid dog staring her down.

Brett is deeply concerned about his dog, a concern that causes him to sleepwalk. Despite watching this episode, Charity still has not come to the conclusion that Cujo has gone rabid.

Vic and Roger are concentrating on their difficult, and possibly hopeless, business situation. However, Vic appears to be psychically attached to his family, because he has a dream that is eerily similar to the situation that is happening in reality to his family. However, Vic fails to call home in the middle of the night, something that would have alerted him to Donna's inability to get home. Vic also forgets to call the following day, again missing an opportunity to realize his family is not home.



Pages 184-212

Pages 184-212 Summary

Donna cracks the windows in hopes of conjuring up a breeze. Donna continues to pin her hopes on the mailman. As Tad reads the Monster Words, Donna finds herself thinking about her parents and their unhappy relationship. Tad urges Donna to try the motor again. Donna is afraid it will attract Cujo, but she tries anyway. The car not only does not start, but it is clear the battery is dying. Donna promises Tad he can have all the soda he wants when they get home. As they sit quietly together, Donna surveys the yard again and she sees a baseball bat lying in the grass.

Steve Kemp is disgusted by the YMCA and he decides to make a drive back to Castle Rock. At the same time, Vic, Roger, and Rob are getting very drunk over lunch. Vic has told them both about the idea of having the Sharp Cereal Professor apologize. They both think it is ingenious, but that it will not do them any good. Back in Castle Rock, the mailman stops at Gary's house, oblivious to the macabre scene inside, and drops off the mail. The mailman then turns around because Joe Camber called the post office yesterday and had his mail held for a few days.

Steve Kemp calls Vic's office and learns that Vic is out of town. Kemp then goes to the Trenton home, hoping to find Donna alone. Instead, the house is empty. Kemp destroys the living room, breaking furniture and tearing pictures off the wall. Kemp then moves into the kitchen, destroying dishes, liquor bottles, and pans. When Kemp sees a note Donna left on the message board telling anyone who might come in that she is at Camber's, he erases it and writes a message of his own. Kemp then goes upstairs and masturbates, leaving a deposit on the master suite's bed.

Late in the afternoon, Donna gives up on the mailman and begins to fear for Tad's life. They have already finished their snacks and milk. Tad is beginning to sleep restlessly, clearly uncomfortable. Donna knows their only chance is for her to go to the porch door, but again she is frightened of what will happen to Tad if she does not make it. The phone begins to ring in the house again. This causes Cujo to become outraged again. This time Cujo begins throwing himself against the driver's side door of the Pinto. Every time he hits the door, Donna is sure he has knocked himself unconscious, but he keeps getting up. Pretty soon, the door is severely dented and the window has a crack.

Brett has tried his father again, and is scared because no one will answer. Charity suspects that Joe went out of town with Gary, but she does not tell this to Brett. Brett and Charity have a snack in the department store. Brett comments that Holly seems fond of showing off her credit cards. At first Charity is upset, but then she realizes that Brett is right. Holly is not what Charity thought she was and she begins to doubt her reasoning in coming to Connecticut.



Pages 184-212 Analysis

Donna pins all her hopes on the mailman, but Camber has canceled his mail delivery. There is no reason for anyone to drive up to Cambers because he canceled his jobs and he canceled his mail delivery. This leaves Donna without hope for rescue because no one will happen by on a dead end, remote road and Charity and Brett are not due home for a week. Donna now has to save herself, but she is afraid to get out of the car because of what might happen to Tad if she should be killed. Donna is stuck in a hard spot, desperate to help her son but unable to find a way to do it.

Brett is unhappy with his aunt and uncle because they seem to be showing off their money, or perhaps rubbing it in Charity's face. This offends Brett and causes a rift between him and his mother for a moment, until Charity comes to realize that Brett is simply observant and that her sister is not the person she thought she was. Charity is beginning to realize that Brett has a strong character and that is all he is going to need to survive, despite his admiration for his father.

Kemp breaks into the Trenton house and destroys the first floor. While he is there, Kemp erases a message Donna left, telling anyone who comes into the house where she has gone. This is another missed opportunity, another possible source of rescue for Donna and Tad that will not be realized because of someone else's actions.



Pages 212-256

Pages 212-256 Summary

The sun has begun to go down and Tad begins to return to something like normal. However, Donna does not know that Tad is escaping in his mind to a pond where ducks play. Donna searches for Cujo, wondering if he is still in front of the car or if he has left. Donna decides to try to run for the door while Tad is sleeping peacefully. Donna struggles to open the door and then becomes convinced it will not close again. Donna closes the door and it latches. When Cujo does not appear after all that noise, Donna becomes convinced that he has gone away. Donna opens the door again and carefully steps out. Donna closes the door, picks up some pebbles, and throws them over the hood of the car. When nothing happens, Donna begins to walk toward the porch door. Donna is nearly there when Cujo suddenly appears from in front of the car.

Donna rushes back to the car, but Cujo is on her when she sits down. Cujo bites at her stomach. Donna begins slamming the door on Cujo's chest. Cujo bites Donna's leg, taking a chunk out and biting several times more. Donna finally slams the door on Cujo's head and he finally gives up. Tad is screaming. Donna soothes him, promising him the dog will not be able to get into the car again. At the same moment, Vic is trying to call home, but not getting an answer. Vic decides Donna and Tad probably went to get an ice cream, so he does not worry. When Roger becomes upset about the impending doom surrounding AdWorx, Vic finds himself on the verge of telling Roger the truth. However, he stops himself before the words actually come out.

Charity calls a friend of Joe's to ask if he was asked to feed Cujo. Charity speaks to the man's wife, but gets the impression Joe had not been there in nearly a week. Brett becomes upset, convinced Charity has not done enough to ascertain that Cujo is okay. Later that night, Vic continues to try to get Donna on the phone. When Donna does not answer by midnight, Vic wakes Roger and asks his advice. Roger tells Vic to call the police and have them check the house. A cop runs to the house and goes inside. When he sees the destruction, the cop calls it in. At the same time, Donna is in excruciating pain and is now frightened that she will suffer the agonies of rabies. Donna has grown desperate now.

Vic gets a call from Sheriff Bannerman telling him what they found in the house. Vic is convinced that Kemp has taken his family. Vic tells Bannerman and Roger about Donna's affair, explaining why he thinks Kemp took his family. Then Vic makes arrangements to drive back to Castle Rock in a rental car. The following morning, Charity wakes in Connecticut resolved to return to her marriage. Charity realizes that her dreams of divorce were unrealistic. Back in the Camber driveway, Donna and Tad wake and begin to play twenty questions in order to keep themselves distracted. Suddenly, Tad has a convulsion. Donna realizes Tad is choking on his tongue so she sticks her fingers in his mouth to clear his airway. Afterward, Donna promises it will be only a little longer.



Pages 212-256 Analysis

Donna decides to go for the porch door while Tad is resting peacefully, but she does not realize Cujo is still in front of the car. Suddenly the seriousness of the situation becomes abundantly clear. Donna cannot leave the car, she cannot move the car, and no one is coming. This leaves Donna, now horribly wounded, desperate to help her son but with no means to do so. When Tad begins having convulsions, this increases the desperation of the situation. Now Donna's only hope are the cops now in her house and her husband, who is on his way home. Unfortunately, the note telling them where Donna has gone is no longer on the message board and no one has any idea where she is. In fact, they all believe she has been kidnapped by Kemp. However, Kemp is just a bully who would never have kidnapped Donna.

In Connecticut, Charity has come to the conclusion that her life is what it is and she must return to her marriage despite the abuse she suffers at Joe's hands. Charity knows that her son has a strong character and that she must trust him to become a good person on his own despite the influence of his father. Charity made her choices, now she must live with them.



Pages 256-304

Pages 256-304 Summary

Vic returns home and finds the sheriff, a state policeman, and a man from the DA's office waiting for him. The DA man, Andy Masen, focuses on Donna's missing car. Masen wonders why Kemp would take the Pinto if he kidnapped Donna and Tad, since he had a vehicle of his own. Vic tells him about the conversation he had with Donna about repairing the car. Masen calls the dealership in Paris, but they do not have the car. Vic tells him about Camber's, but Masen dismisses the idea that Donna left her car there because there would be a rental car or she would have gotten a ride home. Masen cannot imagine anything could have kept Donna at Camber's. Masen sends Vic to get some sleep, promising to wake him if anything happens.

The state police call and tell Masen that Kemp has been arrested and is on his way to the state police barracks. Masen takes the state police officer and heads out, while ordering the sheriff to check out Cambers. The sheriff also does not believe that he will find anything at Camber's, so he is surprised to see the Pinto sitting in the yard. The sheriff gets out to check out the car and is attacked by Cujo. Donna steps out of the car to distract Cujo, but the sheriff has already been gutted. He tries to get back to his car to call for help, but Cujo attacks again, killing him.

Vic wakes around noon when Roger calls to tell him that the Sharp people have sent a telegram offering them a two year contract. Vic thanks him and then calls Masen to get an update. Vic goes into Tad's room and sees the closet door open. Vic decides to leave, to go to the state police barracks. However, Vic decides to check out Camber's first. When Vic passes Gary Pervier's house, he stops. When Vic sees the blood on the porch and Gary's body in the hallway, he suddenly realizes what has happened and rushes up to Camber's.

Tad has another convulsion and Donna cannot wait any longer. Donna places Tad in the back of the car, climbs out through his door and grabs the baseball bat she saw in the grass the previous day. Donna begins to beat the dog. Cujo bites into Donna's arms, but she keeps beating him. Finally Donna shoves a piece of the now broken baseball bat into Cujo's eye. Donna continues to beat the dog until Vic arrives and pulls Tad from the car. Vic tells Donna that Tad is dead. Donna refuses to believe him and begins CPR. When the ambulance arrives, Donna has to be sedated and pulled from Tad by four people.

Donna recovers in the hospital for four weeks and returns home. Donna is filled with guilt, but Vic is too. Charity and Brett return to the farm and decide that with the lottery winnings and a small life insurance payment they can stay for at least five years. Six months after Cujo's death, Charity gives Brett a new dog. This dog has had his shots.



Pages 256-304 Analysis

The investigation focuses on Kemp, whom the police believe destroyed the house, which he did, and that he stole Donna and Tad, which he did not. This causes a seven hour waste of time while Donna and Tad continue to fight for their lives. Tad is so sick now that he is having convulsions. The chances of Tad surviving are growing more and more slim. When the sheriff arrives, it looks like there might be some hope, but instead the sheriff dies. This leaves Donna more frightened than ever to get out of her car.

Vic finally goes to get Donna at Cambers, but he is too late. Donna has finally found the strength to get kill the dog, but Tad is dead. Now the reader can look back at all the missed opportunities, and there were a lot of them, and wonder how one little change could have saved Tad's life. For Donna and Vic, the trauma of these two days seems to be over, but it is not. They will grieve their son for the rest of their lives and live with the guilt that they might have done something different and saved the boy's life. At the same time, Charity and Brett Cambers have gone on with their lives peacefully, even adopting another dog. The adoption of this dog points out one last missed opportunity, however. What if Cujo had had his shots?



Characters

Vic Trenton

Vic Trenton is an advertiser who three years ago opened his own agency, AdWorx, with a partner. Vic is married and has one child. Vic believed the move to Maine would be a good one for himself and his family, but Vic's wife has been unhappy with the move. Vic's wife feels as though she has lost something of her youth by moving to Maine. This leads Vic's wife to have an affair, a situation that threatens to tear their marriage apart.

As Vic is dealing with the implosion of his marriage, he is also dealing with the possible destruction of his business. When Vic and his partner moved to Maine, they brought with them one major client whose business promised to keep Vic and his partner's new business afloat long enough for them to find other clients who would keep them in work for a long time to come. However, when the Red Raspberry Zinger's debacle takes place, Vic and his partner are frightened that they will lose the big account. This will mean sure failure for their business, leaving both men frantically trying to find a way to convince the company to keep them on.

Vic's whole life seems to be falling apart around him. Therefore, when Vic calls home from the road and does not get an answer, he begins to fear that his wife has left him. However, when police discover that Vic's house has been vandalized, Vic becomes convinced that his wife's lover has stolen his family. This conviction causes a delay in discovering the whereabouts of Vic's family, perhaps contributing to the death of his child.

Donna Trenton

Donna Trenton is Vic Trenton's wife. Donna is a housewife who is not happy with staying home all day to watch her son grow further and further away from her. Donna does not want to do the things that other housewives do, such as joining charity organizations or taking yoga classes. Donna wants a different life, a life like she had when she was young. For this reason, Donna has an affair with a local furniture restorer and tennis pro. Donna quickly comes to regret this affair and she breaks it off, but her lover sends a letter to her husband confessing the affair for her.

Donna becomes frightened that her marriage is falling apart. This fear causes her to focus on her child and her family responsibilities again, but perhaps a little too late. When Donna's car begins having mechanical problems, she decides to take responsibility for it and drive it to Camber's garage, a local guy that her husband likes. However, when Donna arrives, Camber is nowhere to be found, the car will not start again, and there is a rabid dog in the yard. Donna and her son are trapped in the car for nearly forty-eight hours before Donna is finally able to kill the dog. However, by then it is too late and Donna's four-year-old son is dead.



Tad Trenton

Tad Trenton is Donna and Vic's four-year-old son. Tad is a typical four-year-old, convinced there is a monster in his closet. However, the monster in Tad's closet seems to have some substance to it. The closet keeps opening on its own, and a stack of blankets that Tad's parents have removed repetitively from the closet somehow keep reappearing. Eventually Tad finds some peace in the Monster Words, a litany of words his father speaks over Tad's bed every night.

Tad is an insightful little boy who is aware when something dark comes between his parents. Even though Tad does not know for sure what is going on, he senses that whatever it is is not good. Tad begins carrying his Monster Words with him after his father goes away on a business trip. For this reason, Tad has the words with him when he and his mother become trapped at the Camber farm. Tad reads the words repetitively, but they do not appear to help. Eventually, Tad begins to suffer from dehydration and dies as his mother is killing the monster that has held them captive for two days.

Cujo

Cujo is the loving, loyal dog that belongs to Brett Camber. Cujo is a large dog, a Saint Bernard that weighs more than two hundred pounds. However, Cujo is so gentle that he once would run around the Camber farm with Brett riding behind him and little three-year-old Tad Trenton on his back. Cujo wants to protect his family and would willingly die for them. However, while chasing a rabbit one day, Cujo finds a small natural cave that the Cambers do not even know is on their property. Inside the cave are bats. While Cujo is attempting to get into the cave to catch the rabbit, one of the bats bites him. This causes Cujo to become rabid. When Cujo becomes rabid, his thought processes change and he begins to believe that the humans around him are responsible for the unbearable pain he feels. Cujo kills Joe Camber, his friend Gary Pervier, the sheriff, and keeps Donna and Tad Trenton captive in their car until Tad dies of dehydration. Cujo is eventually killed when Donna beats him to death with a broken bat.

Steve Kemp

Steven Kemp is a poet, a furniture restorer, and a tennis pro. When she becomes bored in her life, Donna Trenton begins a flirtation with Steve that leads to an affair. Steve is the type of man who has many affairs and he prides himself on being the one to end these affairs before the woman can. However, Steve misses the signals with Donna and finds himself being dumped. This upsets Steve, and he decides to get revenge by sending Vic Trenton a letter that makes it clear that he and Donna had an affair. After he mails the letter, Steve leaves town, but he does not go far because he wants to see the wreckage he has created. Steve goes back to the Trenton home, hoping to see Donna again. When Donna is not home, Steve wrecks the first floor of the house and erases the only means by which someone might realize where Donna and Tad Trenton have



gone. Steve is arrested, but he refuses to talk to the police, delaying the search for Donna and Tad long enough that Tad dies.

Joe Camber

Joe Camber is a mechanic who works from his farm in a remote area outside Castle Rock. Vic Trenton took his Jag to Joe Camber and was happy with his fair rates, so he recommends Joe to his wife when her carburetor begins acting up. While Joe is a good mechanic and fair in his prices, he is not a good husband. Joe is controlling and abusive with his wife. Joe is also becoming an alcoholic, spending more and more of his time drinking. It is perhaps because of Joe's drinking that he does not notice the signs in Cujo as he becomes insane with rabies. It is not until his friend Gary Pervier is killed that Joe finally realizes what Cujo has become. However, it is too late when this realization comes, because Cujo is so far gone that he does not recognize his beloved owner and he kills him too.

Charity Camber

Charity Camber is a young woman who grew up with an alcoholic and abusive father in such poverty that there was often nothing in the home to eat. Charity got out of that life by marrying Joe Camber. However, Joe is barely a step above Charity's father. Joe owns a farm and a business, but he is just as abusive and as frequently drunk as Charity's father. Charity is afraid for her son, afraid that he will grow up to become just like his father. When Charity wins the lottery, rather than thinking of divorce and a new start, she thinks of taking her son to visit his aunt so that he might see there is a different world out there than the one in which his father lives in. Charity gets her way, but soon discovers that it takes more than money to get a person out of the poverty and abuse of her country lifestyle. In the end, Charity resolves to return to her marriage and do the best she can by her child. When Charity learns that her husband has been killed, Charity is happy until she realizes she must tell her child. However, with Joe's death, Charity finally has the opportunity she wanted to give her son a better life than the one she has had.

Brett Camber

Brett Camber is Joe and Charity Camber's ten-year-old son. Like Tad Trenton, Brett once suffered from nightmares and sleep walking. These habits return when Brett sees Cujo sick the morning he and his mother are to go visit his Aunt Holly. Brett is deeply concerned about his dog, the only creature in the world he truly cares about. Brett makes his mother call home often to find out if his father is caring for the sick dog, but they never get an answer.

Brett is Charity Camber's motivation, her reason for doing many of the things she does in this plot. Charity is worried her son will become an abusive alcoholic like his father, even though she knows that he is highly intelligent and has many opportunities to be



better, to be somebody. Brett is the reason Charity and Brett are not home when Cujo's rabies reaches its peak, and perhaps the reason they survive his illness.

Sheriff Bannerman

Sheriff Bannerman is the sheriff of Castle County, based in Castle Rock. When Vic cannot get Donna to answer the phone, he calls Bannerman's office to run a check on the house; therefore, Bannerman is one of the first officers on the scene. When Steve Kemp is arrested, Bannerman is sent to check out Camber's office because the investigator with the DA's office dislikes Bannerman and thinks Camber's is a dead end. When Bannerman arrives, however, he is almost immediately attacked by Cujo. Cujo disembowels Bannerman before Donna can climb out of the car and distract the dog. Bannerman tries to make it to his car to call for help, but he is weakened by his injuries and is overwhelmed by Cujo.

Andy Masen

Andy Masen is the investigator for the DA's office. Masen is a logical man who has his whole life planned out, a plan that includes a prestigious political career. Masen is in charge of the Trenton case. The fact that Donna's Pinto is missing bothers Masen, and he interrogates Vic repetitively about it, but cannot see any logical explanation for its disappearance along with Donna and Tad. When Vic mentions that Donna might have taken the car to Camber's, Masen cannot see a logical reason why Donna might not have been able to get help from there; therefore, he does not see a reason to investigate the possibility. For this reason, Masen focuses on Kemp, delaying Donna and Tad's rescue long enough for Tad to succumb to dehydration.



Objects/Places

Letter from Kemp to Vic

In a fit of jealous anger, Kemp sends Vic a letter making it clear he has had an affair with Donna.

Monster Words

Vic creates the Monster Words, a speech that is designed to keep monsters away, to help Tad sleep at night.

Thermos

Donna takes two thermoses of milk with her and Tad when they leave to take the Pinto to Camber's garage. Unfortunately, the milk runs out almost immediately, leaving them without fluids for their forty-eight hour ordeal.

Broken Bat

Donna sees a broken bat on the side of the driveway almost immediately after arriving at Camber's. However, she does not use it for two days. When she does use it, Donna uses the broken bat to kill Cujo.

Kitchen Message Board

Donna leaves a message on the message board in the kitchen that tells whoever might need to know that she has taken the Pinto to Camber's. However, Kemp erases the message and replaces it with one of his own.

Lottery Ticket

Charity Camber wins five thousand dollars in the Maine lottery.

Camber's Porch Door

Donna focuses on the Camber's porch door, hoping it is unlocked and will provide a way into the house. However, the one time Donna makes an attempt to reach the door, Cujo attacks her and bites both her stomach and her leg.



Chainfall

Charity Camber buys her husband a brand new chainfall for his mechanics business in order to bribe him into allowing her to visit her sister.

Converted Barn

Camber has converted a barn on his property into a garage in which he repairs cars.

Red Razberry Zingers

Red Razberry Zingers is a sweet cold cereal produced by Sharp Cereal Company. One large batch of the cereal is made with a food dye that is harmless, but causes the vomit and excrement of those who eat it to appear blood red.

Sharp Cereal Professor

The Cereal Professor is an ad campaign for Sharp Cereals in which a professor type character makes the statement, 'Nothing wrong here.' This campaign comes back to haunt Sharp and AdWorx when their new cereal, Red Razberry Zingers, causes children to vomit and excrete blood colored matter.

AdWorx

AdWorx is the name of Vic and Roger's advertising company.

Sharp Cereal Company

Sharp Cereal Company is AdWorx's largest client, a company that produces cereals, frozen cakes, and cookies. Vic and Roger worry they may be fired as the ad company for Sharps after the Red Razberry Zingers debacle makes their cereal campaign, the Cereal Professor, appear to be a lie.

Cave

There is a small, natural cave on the Camber property that has only a small opening in the ground. Cujo chases a rabbit to this hole and is bitten by a rabid bat, causing him to contract rabies.

Blue Pinto

Donna Trenton owns a blue Pinto that has a sticky carburetor valve. Donna drives this car to the Camber farm for Joe Camber to fix, but finds no one home except Cujo. Donna and her child are trapped in this car for forty-eight hours during two of the hottest days in the summer.



Themes

Troubled Marriages

Donna and Vic Trenton have only lived in Maine for a few years. The move from New York City was not something Donna wanted; therefore, she finds it difficult to be comfortable in a town so much smaller than the one she once called home. Added to this, Donna finds her life passing her by. Donna is stuck at home caring for her child and missing out on all the excitement and adventure that came with youth. Donna feels old. This causes stress on her marriage, stress that leads Donna into a flirtation with the tennis pro where her husband Vic plays. As tensions continue to build and Donna continues to be bored in her life, she begins an affair. The affair does not last long, but long enough for Vic to learn the truth and begin to question his future with Donna.

Charity Cambers has been married to Joe for more than seventeen years. Charity grew up in a poor family and suffered abuse at the hands of her father. Now Charity is watching as her husband slides into alcoholism and becomes the same abusive type of man as her father was. Charity is unhappy in her marriage, feeling as though she has no option but to submit to her overbearing husband. However, Charity is concerned for her son. Charity does not want her son to grow up and become a man like his father. Charity does all she can to keep her son from seeing the darker side of his father's life, but she knows it is a losing proposition. This fear leads Charity to a desperate move to force her husband to allow her to take her son to visit relatives, a visit she hopes will open her son's eyes to the potential that life holds.

Troubled marriages are a theme of the novel because both the important families in this novel have marriages that are in trouble. Charity has resolved herself to living with her husband for life, with spending her life with an abusive, controlling man. Donna, on the other hand, is the one responsible for the destruction of her marriage vows, the one who chose to go outside her marriage in an attempt to satisfy something missing in her own character. These two women will find their marriages irrevocably changed by the end of the novel, based on an event that causes their lives to intersect.

Monsters, Real and Imagined

There are many monsters in this novel, real and imagined. The novel begins with the story of Frank Dodd, an officer with the sheriff's department who was discovered to be a serial killer. It is implied that the imagined monster that Tad Trenton sees in his closet is the spirit of Dodd, a reincarnation of the evil that caused Dodd to commit the crimes he did. Tad's parents believe that this monster is just a part of childhood, a product of an overactive imagination. However, as the plot continues to develop, the reader comes to realize that this same imagination has tormented other children in Castle Rock, particularly Brett Camber.



When Donna ends her relationship with Steve Kemp, he becomes something of a monster as well. Kemp is hurt and angry that Donna dumped him before he could dump her. In revenge, Kemp sends a letter to Vic Trenton, making it clear that he has had sex with Vic's wife. Later, when Kemp does not hear from Donna or Vic, he goes to the house and tears up the entire first floor. This causes Vic to believe that Kemp has kidnapped Donna and Tad. Kemp is eventually arrested, but his role as a monster is over by this point. Kemp has become just a sad, dangerous human being.

The real monster in this novel is Cujo. Cujo has been bitten by a bat and has contracted rabies. When Donna arrives at Camber's to have her car fixed Cujo has already killed two people and has become so insane that he convinces himself that the woman and child in the car are responsible for his pain. Cujo keeps Donna and Tad trapped in their car for two days until finally Donna becomes so desperate that she attacks the dog with a broken bat. The dog dies, but not before tormenting and causing Tad Trenton's death.

Poverty versus Privilege

Charity Camber grew up poor. There were times in Charity's life when her family was unable to eat and the shoes on their feet would rot and fall off. Charity needed to escape and she married the first man who came along. This turns out to be a poor choice because Charity's husband Joe is an alcoholic who beats her when she refuses to behave in the way he sees fit. Charity's sister Holly, however, has married a lawyer and lives a life of prosperity. Charity believes this is a world that her son should aspire to. Charity wants to show her son this world and show him what he could have if he avoids the pitfalls that have claimed her husband's life and if he works hard to make a life for himself. However, during the visit, Charity discovers that her sister is not the person she had thought she was. Charity realizes that it is character that will rescue her son from their world, not Holly and her conceits.

Donna and Vic live a life of middle class privilege. Donna is able to stay home with her son, spending her days doing whatever she wants rather than being tied down to a dead end job. This situation leads Donna into a depression, however, that convinces her that she has grown old and missed out on something. Donna has an affair because she is unhappy with her life, even though the life she is living is one Charity Cambers would most likely jump at. The income levels between these two families is another contrast the writer has presented to the reader to show how these two families might live different lives and have different futures. In the end, however, their lives are eerily similar.

Style

Point of View

The point of this novel is third person omniscient. The writer tells his story through the eyes of multiple characters, including all three of the Trentons, all three of the Cambers, and even Cujo. By telling his story through the eyes of many characters, the writer is able to introduce various angles of his story even though the main character, Donna Trenton, might not be aware of an event that will have important relevance to the story. The writer tells his story in such a way that the reader has all the information important to the developments of the plot, information that leads to suspense as the reader watches Donna Trenton place herself and her child in harm's way.

The novel also is written in such a way that the author's voice is often heard, especially at the end of a scene when the author feels it is necessary to pass on some information that the reader might not gain in any other way. The author's voice often tells the reader that while something is happening in one location, something else is happening in another. In this way, the author is pointing out the mistakes and misunderstandings that, if they had not occurred, might have led to the rescue of Donna and Tad Trenton in time to save Tad's life.

The point of view of this novel works within its plot because it allows the reader to see what is going on in many levels within the plot, not just what directly affects the main characters of the novel. If the author had written his novel with only one narrative character or in a first person point of view, the reader would not have gotten the same effect of a suspenseful novel that grows more frightening in every turn of the page. The reader of this novel is allowed to see the thoughts and motivations of every character involved in the plot, including a dog that is unable to speak or relate his emotions in other, conventional ways. This builds a suspense that keeps the reader glued to the page, but it also creates a sense of empathy for everyone, including the dog. This includes the use of the authorial voice, a technique that allows the author to add information that might not have been within the scope of knowledge of any of the characters who narrate the novel. For these reasons, the point of view of this novel works well with its plot.

Setting

This novel is set in the fictional town of Castle Rock, Maine. This is one of many novels by Stephen King that are set in this fictional town. Castle Rock is a small town, the kind of town where everyone knows everyone else. Donna and Vic Trenton moved to Castle Rock from New York City three years before the story begins and a few years after the death of notorious Castle Rock serial killer, Frank Dodd. In the beginning, Donna dislikes the small town atmosphere but later finds it is a good place to raise a child.



As the novel progresses, the author describes the farm of Joe Camber. This farm is located seven miles outside of Castle Rock on Town Road No. 3. The area is remote, a few miles from the highway, and it is a dead end past the Camber farm. When Donna arrives at Camber's, her car dies and she is able to restart it. This leaves Donna and her son, Tad, at the mercy of a rabid dog in an area where she has no reasonable expectation that anyone else will venture out to offer help.

The main setting of the novel, Castle Rock, is a pleasant little village that appears to be the perfect place to raise a child. Donna's unhappiness with this town has nothing to do with the town itself, it simply has to do with her resistance of what she sees as her youth disappearing. Castle Rock is a place where housewives like staying home and cleaning the toilets. Donna is not happy with that. This setting contrasts deeply with the setting of Camber's farm for Donna. Donna is taken out of this housewife setting and placed in a real isolated location and discovers just how much freedom and hope she had in Castle Rock. The two settings of this novel contrast wildly with each other, the Camber farm becoming a sinister, dark place filled with death for Donna Trenton, whereas it becomes a place of home and hope for Charity Camber after the death of her husband Joe Camber.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is simple. The language often reflects the education and nature of the characters. When Aunt Evvie is speaking, the language appears in bold text, expressing the loudness with which old deaf Aunt Evvie speaks. When the mailman speaks, his language is often crude, as is the language of Joe Camber and his friend Gary Pervier. With the Trentons, however, the language becomes less crude and more educated, reflecting the college education both Vic and Donna were lucky enough to receive.

The language of the novel is simple and does not include any complicated technical words or foreign phrases. The characters of this novel are simple people living in a small, simple community. As a result, the language of the novel is simple and reflects the education and backgrounds of the many characters. For this reason, the language becomes a supporting partner in the development of the plot, allowing readers to comprehend the nature of the characters.

Structure

The novel is written as though it is one, long fairy tale. The novel begins with the words "once upon a time." There are no chapters, no parts, no breaks in the narration except for paragraph breaks that allow the reader to know when there is a change in narration or setting. The writer has written his novel in such a way that it almost appears to be the type of fairy tale a parent might read to a child before going to bed. However, this novel is not a fairy tale intended for children, but one to give any parent nightmares.



The novel has many stories that work together to create one frightening plot. The novel begins with the simple story of a little boy who believes that there is a monster in his closet. The monster continuously finds a way out of the closet and eventually becomes a real monster that attacks both the boy and his mother. The novel also includes the story of a mother who would do almost anything to show her growing son that there is more to life than his father's drunken abuse and manual labor. Finally, there is the story of a beloved family pet that is bitten by a rabid bat. This dog slowly becomes insane with his illness, becoming a monster that he never would have dreamed of being when he had control of his body and his mind. All these stories come together when one tragedy reaches out and touches two families, changing their lives irrevocably.



Quotes

"Except the monster never dies. Werewolf, vampire, ghoul, unnamable creature from the wastes. The monster never dies." p. 4

"It was possible that one of them might call him BADDOG. And at this particular moment he certainly considered himself to be a BADDOG." p. 21

"Nope, not a single thing wrong here." p. 31

"Just before Tad's bedtime, he and Vic sat on the back stoop. Vic had beer. Tad had milk." p. 57

"The porcelain was a discolored yellowish color. Like Joe, their water was hard." p. 83

"Neither noticed that Cujo's head had come off his paws at the sound and that he was growling very softly." p. 96

"He suddenly understood that THE MAN had made him sick." p. 111

"She didn't like the way her thoughts were speeding up, and she pushed the whole mess resolutely away before it could grow to avalanche size and bury her in another deep depression." p. 131

"She had to grin at herself because everyone in Maine understood that if you moved here from another place, you would be an out-of-stater until you were sent down in your grave." p. 143

"She was a rational woman. She did not believe in monsters from closets; she believed in things she could see and touch. There was nothing supernatural about the slobbering wreck of a Saint Bernard sitting in the shade of a barn; he was merely a sick animal that had been bitten by a rabid fox or skunk or something." p. 203

"It was just past 6 a.m. and the day was coming bright when Tad had his convulsion." p. 252

"How long has he been dead, Donna?" p. 291



Topics for Discussion

Who is Donna Trenton? Why is she unhappy in her life? Why has Donna had an affair? Why has Donna ended the affair? What has changed in Donna's life to make her see the mistakes she has made? How does the affair impact Donna's life? How does the affair make it difficult for her husband to come to her rescue when she becomes trapped at Camber's? How do the events at Camber's change Donna's life?

What is Red Razberry Zingers? Why does this cereal cause a national uproar? How does this uproar affect AdWorx? What will happen to the Trenton family if they lose this account? What is Vic's idea to fix this problem? Will it work? Why is it important that this work? Who is the Cereal Professor? What does he have to do with this problem? How might he fix it?

What kind of dog is Cujo? What is unusual about Cujo's size? Who does Cujo belong to? Is Cujo a good dog? Why does Cujo chase the rabbit? Where does he chase it? What happens? How does this cause Cujo to become sick? How might this have been prevented? Whose fault is it that Cujo becomes ill? Why does no one in the Camber family notice Cujo's illness? What might have been done had someone noticed Cujo's illness sooner?

Why does Charity Camber want to visit her sister? Why does Charity buy Joe a chainfall? How does Charity believe this will influence Joe's decision to allow her to visit her sister? Why does Charity insist that her son, Brett, go with her? Why does Charity believe Joe will not agree to this? What does Charity agree Joe can do with Brett if he allows her to take him to her sisters? Why does Charity agree to this? Why is Charity frightened for Brett?

Who is Gary Pervier? What war did Gary fight in? What medal did he have melted down into an ashtray? For what reason? What does Gary blame the military for? Why does Gary drink? Who is Gary's friend? Why does Gary not notice Cujo's growing odd behavior? Why does Gary not say anything to the Cambers? What might have happened had Gary said something to someone?

Who is Steve Kemp? Why does Kemp leave town after mailing a letter to Vic Trenton? Why does Kemp return? What does Kemp hope to do when he returns to the Trenton house? What does he find? Why does Kemp erase Donna's note about taking the Pinto to Cambers? Would Tad have been saved if Kemp did not erase this note? Explain.

Discuss the monster in Tad's closet. Why does the author introduce Frank Dodd at the same time he introduces the monster in the closet? Is the monster in the closet real? What is the smell the Trentons often smell in the closet? Why do the blankets and stuffed animals repeatedly move around? Why does Donna think she recognizes something in Cujo's eyes, something connected to Tad's closet? Why does Tad think Cujo is the monster from his closet? Why does Vic see the closet door open on its own before he rescues Donna?



What are the Monster Words? Why does Vic make them up? How do they help Tad? Why does Tad carry them with him when they go to Camber's garage? When does Tad realize they do not work? Why does Vic crumple them up after Tad's death? What do these words symbolize to Tad? To Vic? To Donna?