

Delirium Study Guide

Delirium by Lauren Oliver

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

Contents

Delirium Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-2.....	4
Chapters 3-4.....	6
Chapters 5-6.....	8
Chapters 7-8.....	10
Chapters 9-10.....	12
Chapters 11-12.....	14
Chapters 13-14.....	16
Chapters 15-16.....	18
Chapters 17-18.....	20
Chapters 19-20.....	22
Chapters 21-22.....	24
Chapters 23-24.....	26
Chapters 25-27.....	28
Characters.....	30
Objects/Places.....	33
Themes.....	35
Style.....	37
Quotes.....	40
Topics for Discussion.....	41

Plot Summary

In *Delirium*, seventeen-year-old Lena is waiting for her birthday, when she can have a procedure to stop her from falling in love; a condition that has been ruled a disease. Before she can get the procedure though, she falls in love with an Invalid, Alex, one of the rebels living unaltered in the Wilds outside civilized cities. Lena discovers that much of her life is a lie, including the supposed suicide of her mother, and runs off to the Wilds, but in the process, Alex sacrifices himself for her.

As the story begins, Lena waits anxiously for her procedure when all her pain will be removed. She lives in Portland, Maine, which like all U.S. cities is surrounded by guards and electric fences. No one is allowed in or out and no one is allowed to live in the Wilds outside the fences. There are rumored Invalids, who have not been "cured," living in the Wilds, but the government denies it. Lena plans to spend her last summer with her best friend Hana, before they are cured.

Lena goes for her evaluation, an oral exam through which the government will assign her a mate. She messes up, but the evaluation is interrupted when Invalids protest by letting loose cows in the labs. Lena sees a boy laughing in the observation area above her evaluation. Later, she meets him again. He is a security guard, who she thinks is cured, named Alex.

Meanwhile, Hana starts listening to underground music and going to illegal parties. Lena is frightened of breaking the rules. They start drifting apart, but not before Lena runs into Alex again at an illegal party. They agree to meet at the beach the next day, but when Alex tells Lena that he's not really cured and is an Invalid who grew up in the Wilds, she is frightened and runs away.

Lena tries to go back to being good and follow all the rules, not seeing Hana or Alex, but one night when Lena knows Hana is at an illegal party, the government has raids, looking for signs of illegal activity. Lena goes to warn Hana. She is too late, but Alex saves her from the raiding party, with their batons and attack dogs. Lena and Alex kiss. She is falling in love.

The summer goes by quickly, with Hana, Lena, and Alex hanging out together. Lena even visits the Wilds, but she is reluctant to run away there. Then Lena discovers that her mother, who Lena thought committed suicide, was locked away in the Crypts, dungeon-like prisons. She has recently escaped into the Wilds. Lena's whole world falls apart. She feels betrayed by her family and society and decides to run away with Alex. They make plans to escape, but Lena is discovered out past curfew at an abandoned house. She is tied up and her procedure is rescheduled to happen immediately. Alex comes to rescue her and they make a dash for the border. Alex sacrifices himself in order to allow Lena to escape.

Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

Delirium is set in Portland, Maine, in a future or alternate world, sixty-four years after love has been declared a disease in the U.S. Seventeen-year-old Lena, an orphan whose mother supposedly committed suicide, is approaching her eighteenth birthday when she will have the mandatory procedure to stop her from falling in love, and be assigned a mate.

As Chapter 1 begins, Lena is anxiously awaiting the procedure, which her sister Rachel had nine years ago. In ninety-five days it will be Lena's eighteenth birthday, September 3, and she will have the procedure and be cured of love. Then she will be happy and safe, her Aunt Carol tells her.

Some people resist the procedure. One girl broke free at the last moment and jumped off the laboratory roof. TV stations broadcast her dead face as a caution against the dangers of the disease of love: amor deliria nervosa. Lena is nervous about the procedure, but she is more afraid of the deliria.

In Chapter 2, Lena wakes up on the morning of her evaluation, a formal review that will determine her choices for her spouse. Lena shares a room with her cousin Marcia's children Jenny and Grace, and the younger one, Grace, is awake, chewing the outside of an orange. It reminds Lena of her mother's funeral, where someone fed her four oranges to keep her quiet. Lena takes the orange, peels it, and gives Grace the sections.

Grace never speaks. Grace's father was suspected of being a sympathizer, opposed to the procedure, and disappeared before his trial, which would likely have ended in a summary execution. A few months later, Grace's mother Marcia died of a heart attack.

Lena is nervous about her evaluation. She has taken all her school exams, and based on her scores, she'll be assigned a college and major. After the evaluation, she'll be assigned four or five prospective spouses, and she'll marry one after college. Lena has hardly ever spoken to a boy, since contact between uncured girls and boys is forbidden. Lena hopes to do well and put behind the family the specters of Marcia's sympathizer husband and Lena's mother's suicide.

Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The novel is written in first person, in the present tense, from Lena's point of view, so that the reader understands Lena's present emotions and attitudes at each part of the novel. Lena as the narrator doesn't know or hint what will happen in the future. At the start of the novel, Lena believes in the society she lives in and the propaganda she's been told. She believes that Invalids are to be feared, and that love is a disease that will

kill you. She is shamed by her mother, and she is anxious to have her pain taken away from her by the cure.

Though the reader sees Lena's perspective, the reader is also aware that something is wrong in Lena's society. The idea that love is a disease to be cured will go against the reader's assumptions, and the novel is filled with examples of how the "cure" takes away characters' emotions, empathy, friendship, and familial love. Lena's sister Rachel is distant after her cure. Jenny and Grace's mother was emotionally removed from her children and never wanted them. Lena relates the story of a girl who ran from her procedure and threw herself off the roof. Lena sees this story as a condemnation of the disease of love, which the girl contracted. In actuality, it is a condemnation of the mandatory cure that the government militantly administers.

Additionally, the society's tyrannical nature is clear. Grace and Jenny's father was suspected of being a sympathizer who questioned the official government view of the cure. He was set to be tried for his beliefs, but Lena characterizes the trial as a mere formality. The punishment for disagreement is death. The society militantly imprisons and executes political prisoners: those who object to the way the society is run. This is a mark of tyranny.

Chapters 3-4

Chapters 3-4 Summary

In Chapter 3, Aunt Carol accompanies Lena to her evaluation. Carol advises Lena to give general answers, and to choose blue as a favorite color. Lena rehearses her answers, about working on the school paper and doing photography as a hobby, running and hanging out with friends.

Lena runs into her best friend Hana, a beautiful blond girl, who in contrast to Lena is relaxed and joking. Hana has always been outspoken, but lately she's been talking back to teachers acting distracted. She criticizes the system of assigned spouses, and Lena is horrified and makes her take it back. The line of teenagers filters past a barbed-wire topped fence into the official government building. A nurse comes out and passes out clipboards and forms. Finally it's Hana's turn to go in. Before she does, she goes to Lena and whispers urgently, asking Lena if she knows that to be happy, you have to be unhappy.

Chapter 4 begins as Lena enters the waiting room. After a short wait, a nurse brings her down a hall. Lena worries about Hana's criticisms of the system, but she's glad she doesn't have to choose a spouse. She doesn't think anyone would want her or think she was pretty. The nurse puts her in a room, telling her to take off her clothes and put on a sheer plastic hospital gown, then go through a blue door when she's ready.

Lena steps into the inner room, a surgery, where four evaluators are waiting. She turns in her forms, and they begin asking questions. At first things go well, but then Lena starts thinking about her mother, who had the cure procedure three times. It didn't work on her, though, and she killed herself. For the third procedure, they didn't use anesthesia, suspecting it was interfering with the cure. Lena remembers her mother's last words: "I love you. Remember. They cannot take it."

Lena has a glass of water, and the evaluators ask about her favorite books. When they ask why she likes *Romeo and Juliet*, though, instead of giving the standard answer that it's a frightening cautionary tale, she says it's beautiful. Her interview begins to fall apart. They ask about her favorite color, and instead of giving the acceptable answer of blue, she says it's gray, the light, bright gray of early morning.

Lena's floundering evaluations are interrupted bizarrely when a herd of cows rushes in, wearing hospital gowns and wigs. "Not Cure. Death," is written on their sides. It is an act of rebellion by the Invalids, uncured adults who live in the Wilds around the city. As Lena hides behind a table, she sees a boy in the observation deck that overlooks the surgery. He is laughing. Lena stares, stunned, and then the boy winks at her.

Chapters 3-4 Analysis

The story is set at Lena's coming-of-age, in part because it is the story of a girl finding herself and becoming an adult. The administration of the evaluation and the "cure" are rites of passage in the society, when a child becomes an adult. Emotion and passion are childish things in a culture where all adults are stripped of them. Even in our own society, the height of passion and both high and low emotions are during the turbulence of adolescence, and often there is an assumption that as we grow, extreme passion will fade. The novel's spin on the coming-of-age story speaks of a desire to carry emotion and passion into adulthood and not leave it behind in adolescence.

Lena's friend Hana is introduced in Chapter 3 and she serves as a literary foil to Lena, her opposite. While Lena is average, Hana is beautiful. While Lena is timid, Hana is unafraid. When Lena is nervous, Hana is confident. When Lena is socially mediocre, Hana is wealthy and privileged.

The practiced "correct" answers demanded to score well on the evaluations show the society's desire for conformity. There is no true desire to find out what each individual is like. People are judged by how well they fit into society's expectation. Someone who deviates from societal expectations may be more difficult to control. During Lena's evaluation, when she starts to deviate from the expected script, she is showing her individuality and also her passion. She sees something beautiful in the tragic love story of Romeo and Juliet; she sees something wonderful in the early morning sunrise. These poetic impulses are not supported by the society. The penalty for a bad performance or too much individualism is ostracism and poverty through a poor match.

The invasion of the evaluations by a herd of cows is the first direct incursion of the Invalids into the novel. The cows are a metaphor for the people being evaluated. They are herded through the labs like animals, judged against a non-human standard, and assigned a fate without regard to their will or humanity.

Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary

In Chapter 5, Lena has a recurring dream that she's on a cliff's edge, and as she's about to fall, she sees her mother dead in the water below before awaking. When Lena wakes, Gracie is in bed with her. Lena knows that Gracie isn't dumb. She can speak, but chooses not to. She is grieving for her mother.

Lena goes down to breakfast and discovers the official reason for the cattle invading the evaluations is a supposed shipping mix-up. The government denies the existence of Invalids. The U.S. exists completely closed off, behind protected borders. Lena is relieved that her evaluation has been invalidated and rescheduled, so she gets a second chance. Lena tells her family that she's tired because she had a bad dream, and her uncle says he dreamed as well, one of the few dreams he has since the procedure. He dreamed he was endlessly caulking a window. When Carol rarely dreams, she ends up dreaming of endless stacks of dishes.

Lena started running on the day of her mother's funeral when she overheard an acquaintance say something cruel and couldn't stand it. Now she runs with her best friend Hana. As they change in the locker room, Hana talks about the Invalids and how the news reports are clearly untrue, making Lena uncomfortable. When someone comes through the door, Hana changes topics.

Lena and Hana go running, and they talk about Willow Marks, a girl who gets in trouble for playing around with boys. Her procedure is being done six months early, which is dangerous. Hana leads them to the government lab complex where the evaluations were done, and past a no trespassing sign and empty guard station. Lena follows reluctantly.

The two girls are stopped by a guard - the boy with the golden-brown hair Lena saw in the observation deck. Lena sees scars from the cure on his neck. The boy, Alex, denies he's ever seen her, but Lena knows he's lying. Alex brings the girls to a hill where there is a beautiful view of the bay. As they are staring at the view, Alex whispers "gray" in her ear, and she knows that he did see her at the evaluation. He makes a veiled reference to Back Cove and eight thirty, and Lena thinks he must be secretly making an appointment with him. Then Hana notices the time and drags her away.

In Chapter 6, Lena can't get her mind off Alex, and Carol notices when Lena makes mistakes helping Jenny with her homework. Carol guesses Lena is nervous about re-doing her evaluation, and Lena pretends she's right. After dinner, Carol says she's do the dishes, and Lena realizes she'll have time to go to Back Cove. She tells a lie about having to go to Hana's, and even though the nine-o'clock curfew is near, she takes off on her bike.

Lena runs into a patrol of regulators, checking for unapproved activity. They take her ID and plan to do an SVS (Secure Validation System) identity check that might take up to a half hour. One of the volunteer regulators recognizes her, though, and they let her go. As Lena finally approaches Back Cove, the sun is setting spectacularly. She realizes that she's too late to make it all the way to the cove, and so she heads back.

Chapters 5-6 Analysis

Lena's recurring dreams of her mother show how her mother's suicide affects her emotionally. She and Gracie have grief for their mothers in common. Lena's feelings about her mother are strong, but she doesn't fully understand them. She only knows that she is full of pain, and no one can help her with her pain. The adults around her have all given up their emotions and cannot comfort her.

The television announces that the invasion of cows in the labs was a shipping mix-up. Lena knows that this is patently untrue. The cows were dressed in clothes, with writing on them. They were a protest, incontrovertibly. Lena takes it for granted that the government will cover up the protest, but she doesn't realize that this is part of a pattern of behavior of the government. Denying the existence of the Invalids and the protests is part of a large-scale effort spreading propaganda supporting the government's position on the procedure, rewriting history and religion as shown in the quotes introducing each chapter, suppressing opposition, and blocking out the rest of the world.

Aunt Carol and Uncle William still have dreams after their procedures, and their dreams are significant. Carol dreams of endless stacks of dishes, while William dreams of endlessly caulking a window. Both dreams are about doing the dreary chores of life over and over, day in and day out. There is nothing in Carol and William's life to look forward to or to care about; they've been robbed of their ability to care or to love. They cannot love their jobs or the children in their care or each other. All that is left is a series of tedious chores.

Lena meets Alex in Chapter 5. When he whispers "gray" in her ear, he shows that her moment of individuality and passion was meaningful to him. While the evaluators didn't value it, Alex seems to do so. Lena is distracted after the meeting, showing that she is attracted to Alex.

Lena's run-in with the regulators shows the tyrannical nature of the society. Anyone can be stopped at any time and held for a half hour or more while their identity is checked. Lena thinks that the regulators are a necessary evil, there for her protection. In reality, the regulators instill fear and invade civil rights.

Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary

Chapter 7 begins with Lena explaining that her name, Magdalena, comes from Mary Magdalene, who according to the official religion was infected with love. Her final love was Joseph, who abandoned her, leaving her miserable. God cured her of the deliria.

School ends and Lena goes to graduation parties. Some girls get cured before school ends, and they act more mature and distant. Willow Marks, the girl who had the early procedure, does not come back, and the school is full of rumors about what might have happened to her. Her parents are branded as sympathizers and lose their jobs.

At graduation, Hana writes "Thank God!" on the top of her cap. After the ceremony, Lena takes a photo with Hana and sees her sister Rachel, who has been distant every since her cure.

In Chapter 8, school is out for the summer. Lena spends Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays helping her uncle at his store, the Stop-N-Save. On the Fourth of July, Lena goes to Hana's house, in an upper-class gated community. She finds Hana listening to illegal music. She's discovered how to find illegal music and chat rooms, despite the government control of the intranet, which is supposed to contain only approved entertainment and government-written information. She met a censor in her doctor's office and learned how he checked for hackers breaking through the security. From the information she got, she was able to find illegal information on dozens of sites.

Lena is upset and scared. She feels like Hana is changing, becoming a different person. She tries to open the window, but it won't open. Finally, she breaks the latch, which she didn't realize was closed. Lena tells Hana that she could be arrested for what she's doing, and Hana says she's sick of the regulations and being scared that someone is always listening. Hana says that these final days before the "cure" are their last opportunity to make choices.

Hana says that she's going to an illegal party on a farm near the border that night and invites Lena. Hana promises that it's safe, but Lena is frightened. She points out that there are regulators, patrols, curfews, and segregation. Hana doesn't care about the danger. Lena is upset that Hana is breaking their usual plans to spend the holiday together to go to an illegal party. The girls argue. Hana says Lena is scared. Lena says Hana's life is perfect. When Hana mentions Lena's mother, Lena is hurt and storms out. Lena is so upset, she almost gets run over in the street. She feels that Hana doesn't understand. The cure isn't just about stopping the deliria for Lena. It's about fixing all the hurt and unhappiness she has because of her mother's death.

Chapters 7-8 Analysis

In Chapter 7, Lena brings up the official state religion, which is taught in school in classes called "Religious Science." The state religion takes elements of Christianity, such as the story of Mary Magdelene, and twists them and rewrites them to tell stories that support the government policies, turning religion into propaganda. Religion's role is to control the people, and the government controls the religion and teaches it in schools. There is no freedom of religion and no alternative to the state religion.

The story of Willow Marks shows how twisted the society has become. Willow is a very sexual person, attracted to boys, and she gets into trouble. The society's solution is to give her the procedure early and "cure" her of her passion for sex. This, however, is dangerous and can result in any number of side-effects from mental handicap to blindness. The society is willing to sacrifice the health of a citizen to assure conformity. Willow disappears, and no one knows why. Her parents are branded as sympathizers. It could just be a rumor, but they lose their jobs, anyway. They are ostracized. It doesn't matter if they are guilty or innocent. Their lives are ruined.

Lena and Hana have an argument over Hana's illegal activities, but also about their social differences. Lena is sensitive about her mother. Her feelings are unsettled, and she doesn't even fully understand them herself. When Hana mentions her mother, Lena can't handle the conversation. Lena is also frightened. Hana is confident and rebellious, and she seems to be changing in front of Lena's eyes. Lena realizes the advantages that Hana has and resents them on some level. She feels that Hana can't understand her pain at her mother's suicide and her desire to be cured.

Chapters 9-10

Chapters 9-10 Summary

In Chapter 9, Lena is upset over her fight with Hana. She feels like the disease is all she has left of her mother. She remembers making candy out of maple sap and how her mother sang to her at the beach. She also remembers a woman scolding her mother for comforting Lena when Lena fell off her bike. At home, Lena, her mother, and Rachel would close the curtains and dance in their socks. She had to close the curtains and block the doors with pillows so no one would see them dance or hear the music. Her mother wore her father's military pin, a silver dagger, around her neck, but she hid it under her clothes so no one would see. Lena doesn't remember her father, who died of cancer when she was less than a year old.

In the night, Lena slips out of bed, still in her black jeans. She has made up her mind to sneak out, and fearfully makes her way to the door. She bikes through the empty streets. It's the first time she's broken curfew. Amid the fear, she feels a bit of excitement. Lena pedals out to the edges of the city, into the farmland. She leaves her bike and heads for a barn where she can hear music that's definitely unauthorized. It takes her breath away.

Inside the barn, a band is playing, and Lena can't help dancing. Hana spots her and heads to her through the crowd. Lena says she can't stay, and Hana is about to object when a boy comes over to them with cups of whiskey. Lena is frightened by the presence of boys and whiskey. Hana seems like a stranger, and Lena feels alone and out of place. As Lena is leaving, someone else calls her name: Alex. Lena is terrified and exited. Alex mentions that she stood him up at Back Cove, but Lena refuses to apologize. She says Alex is a liar, and he apologizes for lying about being in the evaluation building and gives her an explanation for why he was there, although security isn't allowed inside.

Lena tries to leave, but Alex follows her. He tells her that he's seen her before, at a statue she and Hana call the Governor, where the two girls used to run. The girl used to look inside the statue's fist, in an indentation where it would be easy to hide notes or items. Alex once left a note for her in the Governor's hand, but she never found it. Frightened of her feelings, Lena tries to leave again, but Alex stops her and gets her to dance. He asks her to meet him the next day, and she says yes.

In Chapter 10, Lena lies again to get out of the house in the evening. She meets Alex at secluded East End Beach, which borders the Wilds. Lena thinks about the Wilds. She used to imagine her mother and father had run away to the wilds, but that would make them resisters. Her Aunt Carol thinks the Invalids might all be dead, or else they live like animals.

Lena meets Alex on the nearly empty beach, and they sit for a while. Lena finds herself telling Alex about how her mother used to bring her to this beach. She explains that her mom killed herself when Lena was six. Her mother had the procedure three times but never was successfully cured. Lena is worried that Alex will be repulsed by her story, but afterwards, he races her out into the water. They half-run, half-swim to one of the buoys in the water, horse-playing along the way. Lena is giddily happy and tells Alex how she used to think about the Wilds all the time and that maybe her mom was still alive there.

Alex says that he still thinks about the Wilds. He tells Lena that he was never cured, and the scars on his neck are faked. They're real scars, but not from the procedure. He's one of the Invalids, from the Wilds. Lena is shocked and frightened, and she runs away back to the beach, where she collapses. Alex doesn't follow. When she gets up, she sees that he is still in the water. Lena heads home, not looking back.

Chapters 9-10 Analysis

In Chapter 9, Lena uses personification when she describes the house as making arthritic noises as she sneaks out in the dead of night. She also refers to Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tale-Tell Heart." The descriptive language and reference to Poe's story as Lena makes her way through the dark house shows her fear. Nothing much happens in this long, descriptive passage. The true story is going on inside Lena as she experiences the fear of disobedience.

Later, as Lena bikes toward the party, she describes bats in the sky as a black scythe, using metaphor to enhance the description of the night. She uses simile and personification when she describes a car with a tree growing through it as seeming to be impaled. Lena's rich use of language shows her character's ability to use words, as well as her passionate, poetic, and romantic nature, since she is the narrator. She describes the world around her using poetic words.

Lena's past with her mother has given her an emotional education. Unlike most young people in the society, Lena has experienced the joy of familial love. Her mother's suicide has turned that love sour for Lena, but she still has happy memories of it. When Lena hears the emotional, illegal music, it speaks to her romantic, poetic nature and her emotional experience. Still, Lena is not ready to commit to the underground that Hana has found. It is too far removed from Lena's life and everything she's been taught to believe. Her attraction to Alex, though, is strong enough that she meets him the day after the party. However, when he reveals that he's an Invalid, a word he dislikes, it is too much for Lena. She has moved too far away from her comfort zone, and she recoils from the new world that she's been exposed to.



Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary

In Chapter 11, Lena tells a family secret, how her sister Rachel got the deliria before she was cured by falling in love with a boy named Thomas. Thomas broke her heart, but she still refused the procedure and had to be taken off kicking, screaming, and scratching. Afterward she was calm and content and married the boy she was assigned. Thomas was cured too, and assigned a wife, and everyone has forgotten the painful love.

After Lena's meeting with Alex, she worries she might be infected but sees none of the expected symptoms. Lena works extra time at the store and doesn't see Hana. She concentrates on being good. Lena has to give up running because it's too hot. The last time she runs, she goes to the Governor and checks the hand for a note, without knowing why. She finds a note from Alex, apologizing. When she gets home, she passes out, and must give up running for the summer because of the heat.

Lena retakes her evaluation, giving all the correct answers this time, and gets a list of four possible spouses. She ranks her preferences, and gets assigned to Brian Scharff, her third choice out of four. She will marry him after she graduates the Regional College of Portland, where she will start in the fall.

In Chapter 12, Lena runs into Hana on her way home. Hana has left Lena three messages, but Carol never gave them to Lena. Lena tells Hana about her match, and finds out that Hana is matched with the mayor's son. Lena realizes how far apart the two girls' worlds are and that they won't be friends anymore after the procedure. Hana walks Lena home, and Hana presses Lena about what she's done on her last summer, and Lena realizes she's done hardly anything. Hana's been going to the beach and babysitting. Lena begins remembering all the years of friendship with Hana, realizing that soon their friendship will be gone. They always had great plans for their last summer.

Lena invites Hana to the movies that night, but Hana has plans to go to another illegal party. Lena refuses to go to the party, but Hana tells her where it is anyway. The girls part at Lena's house, still at odds and unable to overcome their distance from each other. As Hana is leaving, she calls Lena's name, but then she tells Lena it was nothing and walks away.

Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Lena recoils against her small incursions into rebellion. She went to a party, and she went to meet a boy. The knowledge that Alex is not "cured" is a shock to her and causes her to react against all her rebellious acts. However, her run to the Governor, when she checks the hand for a note, shows that she does not completely want to give up Alex.

He told her that he once left a note there for her, and the fact that she checks for a note shows that on some level, she wants a communication from him.

Though Lena has lingering feelings for Alex, she proceeds along the path that she's long accepted. She gives all the right answers when she re-takes her evaluations and gets assigned a spouse. She accepts that the procedure will mean she won't be friends with Hana anymore, because she will lose the ability to love friends as well as romantic loves. The difference in their social statuses seems to drive them apart. Hana is, after all, matched with the mayor's son. She is destined to be wealthy and privileged, and because she will have no emotional attachments, she will have no reason to be friends with Lena after she is cured.

The match of Hana with the mayor's son also shows the static nature of the social structure in the novel. There is no real way to change one's social status. The privileged are matched with the privileged and remain in their upper social circle. Both jobs and marriages are assigned and all passion is removed. No one has the ability or incentive to move beyond the circles to which they were born.

Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary

In Chapter 13, Lena comes home. Rachel and her husband are coming to visit. At dinner, they talk about Lena's assigned college and future spouse. Visits from Rachel aren't special; Rachel changed after she was cured. After dinner, the family hears the noise of a raid outside. A bullhorn announces the raid, as the regulators go from house to house checking identities, searching houses, and abusing people. Next door, they hear the dog barking as the regulators invade the property, and then they hear the thumps and whimpers as a regulator beats the dog down.

Even Rachel and Carol are tense, but the regulators bypass their house. Lena is worried about Hana and the possibility her illegal party will be raided. She decides that she has to warn Hana and the other partygoers.

At midnight, Lena gets out of bed and dresses in black. Grace wakes, but then lies back down without interfering. Lena slips out of the house and starts running, afraid that her bike will be too easy to spot. She stops when she hears a noise from what she thinks is a trash bag. It's the dog, Riley, that the raiders beat, left to die on the street. Lena is horrified, but there's nothing she can do. The dog takes its last breath. Angry and disgusted, Lena covers the body.

As Lena makes her way through the city, the raids are easy to avoid. Once she nears the party, in an abandoned neighborhood of large houses deserted after a large sting operation identified sympathizers and resisters in the area, she sees a light. The windows of the house are covered, but she can see activity inside, and she can faintly hear the music as she approaches the door. Inside, the house is noisy and crowded. Lena tries to tell someone about the raid, but before she can make herself heard, the raiders come. Everything is panic, as the raiders let loose dogs.

In Chapter 14, the crowd of partygoers rushes to try to get away from the dogs and raiders. Lena sees people beat down by the regulators, and viciously attacked by the dogs. The partygoers fight each other as they scramble for freedom. As Lena makes her way through a hallway, a dog bites her on the calf. She turns and sees a regulator smiling as he raises his club to beat her. Then someone jerks her away. It's Alex, and he leads her to a shed, with a pee-soaked blanket in it that will hide their scent from the dogs.

Alex cleans Lena's leg with alcohol and bandages it with his shirt. Lena's never seen a boy up close with his shirt off, and she is overwhelmed. As the raid dies down, Alex apologizes that he didn't tell her sooner that he wasn't cured, and Lena says she won't tell anyone about him. He's more concerned that she might hate him. Alex tells her how he was born in the Wilds, and orphaned soon after birth. He came to Portland when he was ten to join the resistance, and he has a fake ID. He says that there are many



Invalids, resisters, and sympathizers. He hates the lack of freedom in Portland, and when he first saw Lena running fast and messing around with the Governor, she reminded him of the birds: free.

Lena just wants to be happy and be like everyone else, but Alex asks if being like everyone else will really make her happy. Then suddenly they are kissing. They make an appointment to meet the next day. Alex takes her home in the early hours, and Lena sneaks into bed, thinking that the deliria will kill her, but she doesn't care.

Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Rachel's visit to the house drives home the point that the procedure doesn't simply remove the extreme passions of romantic love. It removes all kinds of love: love of family, love of friends, love of beauty and art, love of hobbies and activities. Rachel is lost to Lena because of the procedure.

The raid that takes place shows the tyranny of the government. All rights are suspended during raids, and the regulators can do anything they want. There doesn't need to be a reasonable suspicion for regulators to toss you outside, detain you, search your house, and destroy your belongings. Rachel's child was forced out in the snow during the last raid and caught pneumonia. Carol and Rachel's fear shows when the regulators pass through. They say to themselves that the regulators are there for their own protection, but they still live in fear. As Lena cringes in fear at the thought of the raiding party, she uses figurative language that communicates her emotions. She describes the raiding parties as swirling like water in a whirlpool.

Despite the girls' differences, Lena still loves Hana, and she knows that it will be horrific if the raiders find the underground party. Her love for Hana drives her out into the night, pushing her again into the world of rebellion. She is also affected by the murder of the neighbor's dog. She is beginning to realize how terrible the raids and the regulators are.

As Lena runs toward the party to warn Hana and the other party-goers, she again uses figurative language to describe her surroundings. She describes the ravaged toys left on lawns as corpses picked clean by buzzards and says the area looks like an abandoned animal.

The scene of the raiders invading the party is horrific. Attack dogs are let loose on teenagers whose crime is breaking curfew and going to a party. Lena sees more than one girl smashed on the head with a club, and there is the very real possibility of partygoers being killed. Alex comes to Lena at this emotionally heightened moment, which enhances her attraction to him. Lena's world is turned upside-down. The regulators, who are supposed to protect her, are attacking her, and the Invalids, who are supposed to be dangerous monsters, are saving her. The experience is complicated by her physical attraction to Alex and in the end, she succumbs to her feelings.

Chapters 15-16

Chapters 15-16 Summary

In Chapter 15, Lena wakes the next day. Her leg injury hurts and is bleeding through the bandage. Lena calls Hana and leaves a message asking her to call. She tries to hide her limp from her aunt, but Carol notices. Luckily, Carol thinks that Lena has been secretly running, against Carol's wishes.

At work, Lena is distracted. She plans to meet Alex at Back Cove after work, and the minutes go by slowly. She can feel the signs of the deliria: distraction, loss of appetite, difficulty focusing. She doesn't care. She is daydreaming about Alex when he walks in, wanders around the store, and finally buys gum, chips, and root beer. When Alex leaves, Lena pretends she gave him the wrong change and runs after him. As she pretends to give him his correct change, she whispers for him to wait five minutes and then knock four times at a door in a nearby alley.

Lena tells her coworker Jed to check the register and goes to the back room, ostensibly to stock more painkillers. In a moment, there is a knock on the back door, and Lena opens it. It's Hana, though, not Alex. After Lena lets her in, Hana starts to cry. She tells Lena about the raid. As Lena comforts her friend, Alex knocks on the door. When Lena doesn't answer, he sticks his head in. Hana demands an explanation from Lena. Why is Alex there? Lena tells the whole story.

Jed comes to the back room, and Alex hides while Hana explains that she's the reason Lena's been gone so long. After Jed is gone, Alex starts to re-bandage Lena's leg, but Hana takes over, saying that he's doing it wrong. Hana is impressed with Lena and how she's dealing with her injury. The three form a bond.

In Chapter 16, Lena sees Alex every day, and often they hang out with Hana. They spend time in Back Cove and Deering Highlands, in the deserted houses, particularly one at 37 Brooks Street. The first time they go there, Alex and Lena dance without music. They enjoy the overgrown garden in the back.

Alex tells Lena about his life in the Wilds, which he considers his true home. Alex has a way to get in and out of Portland and still visits the Wilds. Lena also tells Alex about her life with her family. She talks to him about her mother and her memories of her youth. Of course, they also spend time kissing and touching each other.

The deliria makes the whole world seem wonderful for Lena, and she even starts thinking of herself as beautiful. Time runs by with frightening quickness. Each day brings Lena closer to the "cure," when she will lose love forever.

Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Lena believes that she is sick when she falls for Alex. She has been warned about the deliria, and she recognizes the "symptoms." Even though she has experienced the beginnings of love, Lena still believes it is an illness that she is suffering from. Even though she has seen the wrongs of the regulators, she doesn't realize how backwards and tyrannical her government is. However, she is committed to her "illness." She can't help but want to be with Alex.

When Alex comes into the store, Lena describes feeling that there is an invisible thread passing between them, from one to the other. Again, she is using figurative language to describe her emotions. Her attraction to Alex translates to a metaphor in her mind.

Hana finds out about Alex, and the secret brings the two girls together again. Lena has entered into Hana's underground world because of her attraction to Alex. She has also shown her feelings for Hana by going to the party to warn her of the raid.

Lena's life changes after she falls for Alex. Alex is the center of her world, now. She has a new family with Alex and she even has a new home at 37 Brooks. Her old family was cold and distant, empty of love. Her new family is bound and defined by love. Lena also starts learning about the world outside of her small, limited experience. Lena has had a sheltered existence, but it was sheltered by the government and the society, not just her family. Alex opens up her world to new things, which is a normal part of growing up.

Chapters 17-18

Chapters 17-18 Summary

In Chapter 17, August has arrived, bringing more heat. Even the usually empty beaches are crowded, so Alex and Lena meet at 37 Brooks. One day, they are lying in the garden, and Lena mentions the Wilds. Alex says that they could go there. Lena knows going to the Wilds would be punishable by death, but though she's afraid, she decides that she wants to go.

The next evening, Alex and Lena meet at Back Cove, and he gives her instructions about the plan to cross over. Only some parts of the electric fence that surrounds the city are turned on, most times, Alex tells her. A sympathizer, the wife of one of the fence guards, will drug his coffee at Alex's signal so that Alex and Lena can cross over.

Lena makes arrangements with Hana to cover for her, pretending that she's going to a sleepover. She packs a bag and leaves, and Carol never suspects. Lena goes to 37 Brooks and sleeps until eleven-twenty at night, when she wakes from a nightmare about her mother, ten minutes early. She goes to Back Cove to meet Alex. They will cross at the tip of Tukey's Bridge, at the northeastern-most part of the cove. As they approach the crossing-point, Lena is frightened, thinking of all the things that could go wrong. Still, they move out into the open area near the fence without incident. The electric fence is off, and Alex and Lena climb over the fence and barbed-wire. They are in the Wilds.

In Chapter 18, Alex and Lena are thrust into darkness on the other side of the fence. Alex pulls Lena through the trees, to the location of a hidden flashlight. They make their way through the woods, following markings of blue paint on the trees, until they reach a paved road. The street was destroyed during the blitz. After the cure was implemented and the towns all closed off by fences and guards, a yearlong blitz attack bombed out all the settlements in the wild, in an attempt to destroy anyone who was not cured and all resisters. Lena learned about the blitz in history class, where it was depicted by smiling, patriotic pilots cleanly destroying houses, but suddenly she realizes the destruction and death of the bombings. Real people were killed. Alex and Lena pass an abandoned house, one that survived the bombs. The Invalids don't stay there, though, because they think it's bad luck.

Alex makes Lena close her eyes as they approach his house. When she opens them, she sees a clearing filled with trailers, tents, vans, and other living quarters. He brings her to his trailer. Inside, he pulls back the tarp that covers the storm-torn roof, and Lena can see the stars and open sky. Alex lights candles, and Lena sees that the trailer is filled with books of poetry, which has been banned in the new society. Alex reads her love poems, and then they lay in the bed and look up at the stars. As she falls asleep, she asks him to tell her another love poem. Alex wakes Lena up around three, and they head back over the fence, through the cove, and to 37 Brooks, where Lena goes back to sleep on the sofa.

Chapters 17-18 Analysis

Alex pushes Lena further into his world when he suggests going to the Wilds. Just as Lena initially resists Hana's illegal parties, she has a negative reaction to each push forward that she is given. Lena's reluctance is grounded in fear. She is not only afraid of an unknown world, but she is also afraid of the tyrannical government she lives under. Lena, though, pushes aside her fear consciously for the first time and makes a decision to go more deeply into the underground society of her world.

Alex gives Lena strength to do this. Early in the novel, Lena feels unsure of herself and average. She doesn't believe anyone could love her. As she spends more time with Alex, she begins to see herself through his eyes. She sees herself as valuable and even as beautiful. As she gains confidence in herself, her fear begins to wane and loosen its grip on her.

Lena is frightened as she makes her way to the electric fence to climb over to the other side. Nothing much happens on the journey, but Lena narrates her emotions as she imagines all the things that might happen. She again uses descriptive and figurative language, and the story is her emotions more than the external actions of the characters.

As Lena's world is expanded, she begins to realize all the falseness of her society. Her experience in the Wilds introduces her to the reality of the blitz and to banned poetry. Since Lena is a natural poet, using figurative language (as when she personifies August: "August makes itself comfortable in Portland, breaths its hot and stinking breath over everything."), it makes sense that she is attracted to poetry. She sees that a whole different world and a whole different life are possible.



Chapters 19-20

Chapters 19-20 Summary

In Chapter 19, Portland is the same, but Lena feels she has changed. When she gets home, Carol asks her to dress nicely and do her hair. Brian Scharff is coming over. Lena doesn't want to meet him, but she has no choice. She is supposed to meet Alex at noon, but she won't be able to. She can't even get him a message. Carol makes her stay inside and fold towels and linens while they wait for Brian to arrive.

Brian is thin and short, with asthma and allergies. Lena goes to get Brian and his mother some water, and she's glad to get out of the room. As she comes back, though, she overhears Brian saying she's not as pretty as her picture, and she makes an excuse to go outside. Brian follows her out. He admits he was rude and says that he meant she looked happier in her pictures. He tells Lena that before his procedure, he wasn't ready. He had feelings for a girl he'd seen in the park. He tells her that the cure works, and that she'll be happier afterwards.

Brian offers Lena his hand to shake with an offer of friendship. After she takes it, Brian calls out to someone across the street that it's okay, she's his pair. It's Alex, watching from across the street. Before Lena can react, Alex rushes off.

In Chapter 20, Brian's visit is over. Lena has to do chores and stay home for dinner, but afterwards, Carol lets her go for a walk. Lena runs to 37 Brooks, but Alex isn't there. Lena walks, distraught, and finds herself at the Governor. She leaves a note in the statue's hand asking Alex to meet her at the house at midnight, so she can explain.

When Lena sneaks out at midnight to meet Alex, she finds that all their things are gone from the house. She thinks he has taken their things and wants nothing more to do with her, but then she feels his hand on her neck. Alex didn't get her note, but he's there. Lena tries to explain, confusedly, about the meeting with Brian. Alex pulls her close and holds her.

Alex brings Lena upstairs. He has made a place for them in one of the bedrooms, with their blanket, books, a sleeping bag, and candles. He's broken through the decayed roof, so the night sky is visible above. They only have a little time left. Lena is overwhelmed. She doesn't want to go through with the procedure, and Alex suggests they could run away to the Wilds. Lena is frightened at the thought. She starts talking about her mother. Lena doesn't want to be like her. She was wonderful, and fun, but sometimes she would cry all night or stay in bed all day. Then she killed herself, abandoned Lena, for love. Lena doesn't want to be the same. She describes her mother's silver-dagger necklace, a memento of Lena's father. Alex starts acting strangely. He tells Lena that she must meet him the next day. He needs to show her something. He thinks her mother is alive.



Chapters 19-20 Analysis

Lena believes that Alex will be angry with her when he sees her with Brian, but he is not angry. Alex is gentle with Lena, and he doesn't push her. He trusts her and doesn't jump to conclusions. Still, the meeting with Brian is a reminder that Alex and Lena's time together is limited. The summer can't last forever, and Lena has a time limit, imposed by society, on her ability to love.

Alex doesn't react badly to the upcoming end of their relationship. Instead, he prepares a surprise for Lena by recreating the Wilds in the bedroom of 37 Brooks. He opens up the roof so that they can lay down beneath the sky. The open roof of Alex's trailer in the Wilds is symbolic of the freedom of the Wilds and of his life without being "cured." He recreates that open roof, bringing a small bit of freedom into the prison-like Portland.

The end of Chapter 20 marks the end of a second phase of the novel. Lena has moved into an underworld and experienced love, but her mother's supposed suicide still hangs over her head. She hasn't come to grips with her feelings about her mother. Those feelings will be churned up far more before the novel is over, because at the end of this chapter, Alex realizes that he's probably seen Lena's mother. She is not dead.

Chapters 21-22

Chapters 21-22 Summary

In Chapter 21, Alex and Lena go to the Crypts, the dungeon-like prisons where dissenters and criminals are kept, as well as the insane. Lena remembers going there as a young child and being very frightened. Alex comes dressed in nice jeans, with his security badge. He brings her into the Crypts and tells the guard that Lena acted up at her evaluation, and that she's here to be frightened into submission. Alex and Lena go inside, where the stench is sickening, and past a security screening. They are supposed to stay in wards one through five.

Some of the guards seem to know Alex, and Lena asks him about it. Alex says his father is there, behind a door that says "lifers," buried in the graveyard that inhabits a small courtyard in the middle of the prison. Alex's father's name is Warren Sheathes, and he was in the Crypts for fourteen years, in Ward Six where the dissenters and political prisoners are held for life. After visiting the graveyard, Alex leads Lena to Ward Six.

In Chapter 22, Lena's fears grow as she and Alex approach Ward Six. Alex tries to calm her. When they get to the ward, though, they find that the guard is not the sympathizer, Thomas, that Alex expects. The new guard is slightly suspicious and at first refuses to let Alex and Lena into the ward. Alex agrees, but gets the guard into conversation.

The guard's name is Frank Dorset. As Alex chats with him, Frank questions him about what Alex knows about Thomas. Alex says that he's heard rumors that Thomas was a sympathizer. Frank confirms it. When Alex questions him, Frank mentions that there was an escape. Thomas must have known something about it. A female prisoner escaped from Ward Six through a tunnel.

Lena's mind leaps to the possibility that the escaped prisoner is her mother, but she realizes it could have been anyone. Meanwhile, Alex tries again to get the guard to let them in. He says that Lena just needs a minute in the ward to straighten her out and realize how dangerous resistance is. The guard asks why they don't just give her the procedure early, but Alex says that her father's the lab commissioner and doesn't want an early procedure. The guard agrees to give them five minutes.

Alex, Lena, and Frank go into Ward Six, through a stinking, dark passage, filled with the low, hopeless moaning of the prisoners. There are about forty closed doors leading to separate cells. Thomas is locked away in one of them. The guard shows Lena one of the prisoners, who looks inhuman crouched, dirty and unshaved, in his cell with nothing but a bucket, a toilet, and a cot. They pass down the hall, and Alex breathes in sharply. He has seen the cell of the escapee, Lena's mother's cell. The walls are covered in writing: the word "love," over and over. Her necklace lies on the ground. The "O" in one

of the words has been drilled all the way through the wall, making a tunnel into the adjacent Wilds.

Chapters 21-22 Analysis

The journey to the Crypts serves to show the reader even more of the government's tyranny. The prisons are more like dungeons than jails, and they are filled with political prisoners, thrust in with the mentally ill. Those that don't fit in with society are pushed away into an institution where they are left to rot. Anyone who might have cared about them has probably been "cured" of that problem.

Lena learns more about Alex at the Crypts. Alex and Lena have something in common. Each had a parent in the Crypts that they didn't know about, and each was too late to meet that parent. In Alex's case, his mother lied to him to save his feelings, something he believes is a mistake. Alex believes in the truth, and that is why he brings Lena on this difficult journey to find out what happened to her mother. The reason he believes in the truth is that he, too, was lied to. Alex never met his father because his father died in the Crypts. Lena misses her mother for another reason. Her mother has escaped.

Symbolically, Lena's mother escapes through the word "LOVE." Love is her salvation and what she holds on to. In her last words to Lena, her mother says that no one can take her love away. The metaphor of love as salvation becomes literal when Lena's mother drills her way out of her cell through the "O" in the word "LOVE." She leaves behind the unique necklace that identifies her for Lena as the escaped prisoner.

Chapters 23-24

Chapters 23-24 Summary

In Chapter 23, Lena and Alex walk back into central Portland, staying on opposite sides of the street. Lena's whole world has turned upside-down. Her mother is alive. She starts to collapse, and Alex tells her to go into an alley, where she sinks down between two dumpsters. In the relative safety of the alley, Alex tries to comfort her, massaging her shoulders, arms, and legs. Lena wonders to herself why her mother didn't come to find her after she escaped.

Alex says that they should get Lena home, but she refuses to go. She thinks Carol and Uncle William lied about her mother. Maybe her sister Rachel even knew. She is too angry to ever go back and wants to run away to the Wilds with Alex. Alex wants her to understand how serious the decision is. She can't ever come back. If she's caught, she'll be killed. Lena is upset, and feels that Alex is taking back his offer. They argue. Lena feels worthless, like no one cares for her. Even her mother didn't come back for her, but Alex points out that if her mother came for her, she'd be putting Lena in danger.

Alex tells Lena that her mother loves her, and that he loves her. Lena's fear starts to crumble away, and she tells Alex that she loves him, too. They make plans to leave together, in one week. Alex will cross over twice to prepare for their departure. Lena goes home and calls Hana, asking her to meet at the tracks. Carol stops Lena as she heads out the door, telling her to be home for dinner. It's only two weeks to Lena's procedure, she points out. Lena pretends to be enthusiastically waiting for it.

In Chapter 24, Lena meets Hana for a run. After three miles, they are both tiring and stop at the beach. Hana starts talking about the procedure, and Lena tells her that she's running away to the Wilds. Lena offers that Hana could come along, but Hana refuses. She can't give up her whole life. Lena tells Hana about finding out that her mother was in the Crypts. Hana understands why Lena has to leave. After a few minutes at the beach, they race back to the track.

Chapters 23-24 Analysis

Lena's pent-up emotions about her mother's supposed suicide are let out when Lena realizes that her mother is alive and escaped from prison. Lena has felt that her mother abandoned her through suicide, and she felt that she was not worth loving. Her mother's suicide felt like a betrayal, and this is part of the reason Lena had low self-esteem. Now, Lena realizes that her mother didn't abandon her, but her low self-esteem still re-emerges. She wonders why her mother didn't try to come find her. She feels, again, abandoned. Alex realizes how dangerous it would be to Lena if her mother tried to come find her, and he tries to soothe Lena. Lena, though, is guided by emotion. Logical

argument only goes so far. It is when Alex tells Lena that he loves her, and when she returns that love, that Lena is able to recover. Her fears about being unlovable dissipate.

Even after Lena recovers from her emotional shock, she sticks by her decision to run away to the Wilds. She wants to commit to Alex and to separate herself from the society that she now sees as full of lies. She doesn't believe in what she's been taught anymore. Hana, on the other hand, is too frightened to run away. The two girls are still literary foils, but now they have changed places. Lena is free of fear and ready to find a new life, while Hana is too frightened to leave behind the world she knows. Society is too ingrained in Hana for her to break free.



Chapters 25-27

Chapters 25-27 Summary

In Chapter 25, Lena heads to 37 Brooks at midnight to meet with Alex., but she finds the gate padlocked. Alex comes up behind her, and the two embrace. Lena asks him about a key to open the padlock, but Alex doesn't understand. They both suddenly realize that neither of them locked the gate. It must be the regulators.

Floodlights hit Alex and Lena and a voice tells them to freeze. Alex shouts at Lena to run and he shoots off into the darkness. Lena, though, is too slow. She is chased down by what seems like hundreds of regulators. Finally, she is caught. A dog attacks her. A regulator clubs her. She loses consciousness.

When Lena wakes, she's at home. She pretends to be asleep when Jenny checks on her. When Jenny is gone, Lena tries to get up but falls to the floor. She overhears the regulator talking to her aunt; they haven't found Alex. Lena gets up and tries the door, but it's locked. She barely gets back to bed before Jenny comes back with a glass of water. Lena's sister Rachel comes in and gives her pills. Both Jenny and Rachel want to know who infected her, but Lena refuses to tell.

Lena tells Rachel that their mother didn't kill herself, but was locked up in the Crypts. Rachel doesn't believe her. Rachel says that she understands Lena's feelings. She remembers what it's like, but it will be better after the procedure. Lena's procedure has been rescheduled for Sunday, less than two days away. Lena starts feeling sleepy. The pills have drugged her, and Carol and Rachel come in with ropes to tie her up.

In Chapter 26, Lena awakes on Saturday, tied up. Hana is there. Carol is out in the hall, guarding the room. The girls talk guardedly, masking what they're saying. Hana communicates that Alex hasn't been caught, but she can't communicate with him. She's being watched. Lena suddenly thinks of the Governor. Pretending to reminisce about passing notes in school and about their runs to the Governor, Lena manages to communicate that Hana should leave a message for Alex at the Governor.

In Chapter 27, time ticks by as Lena lies helpless, fighting pain. She hopes against hope that Alex will come rescue her, in the few hours left before her procedure. Rachel brings Lena a bowl of soup, and Lena asks if it's drugged. She doesn't want to take the food, but knows she needs her strength. She even asks for a second bowl. Evening comes, and the light drains away. Carol brings her more soup for dinner, and insists on coming with Lena to the bathroom. When Carol ties her up again, Lena tenses her muscles to try to make the knots looser.

Uncle William takes over watching her room and Lena hopes he'll fall asleep. Rachel brings a glass of water, and Lena thinks it's drugged. She takes a few sips, and it tastes like medicine. When Rachel leaves, Lena spits the water in her mouth out onto the

pillow. As she waits alone in her room, she thinks of ways she could kill herself to avoid the procedure, if necessary.

Lena tries to loosen her bonds, but she only succeeds in making herself bleed. Lena falls asleep, but wakes to Gracie pulling and gnawing her bonds to free her. William is asleep. Lena opens her window, and miraculously, Alex approaches on a motorcycle. William wakes, and he and Carol barge into the room. Gracie shouts, "Wait!," her first word, and startles Carol and William into giving Lena time to escape.

Lena and Alex flee, pursued by gunfire. They race through the city to the electric fence at Tukey's Bridge. By now, a helicopter is pursuing them, and the fence is electrified. Alex raises his hands and gets off the motorcycle. Alex tells Lena to drive into the fence to short it out, then climb over. He says he'll follow. As she takes off, he gets onto the motorcycle behind her, holding her. He is shot in the arm, but they power through a row of guards and jump off the cycle at the last minute before it crashes into the fence. Alex shouts to Lena to go, and she climbs over the fence. He doesn't follow, though. Instead, he stays behind, facing the oncoming gunmen so that Lena can escape.

Chapters 25-27 Analysis

The novel approaches its climax when Lena's plans are thrown into disarray. The house at 37 Brooks is discovered by the authorities, and Lena is caught by regulators. She is knocked out, identified, and brought home, where she is bound and restrained. Lena is the one who is blamed for her predicament. The crimes against her by the regulators are dismissed as a natural result of Lena's actions.

Lena is helpless after she is caught. Her family drugs her, and her family ties her up. Soon they will force her to undergo an operation that will destroy her emotions. Lena has come full circle, from a girl looking forward to the operation to take away her pain, to a girl in love and conscious of herself, ready to die before her emotions are removed.

In Lena's helpless condition, she needs to rely on others to help her escape. She can only get help because others love her. Hana, who loves Lena as a friend, helps her by sending a communication to Alex. Gracie, who loves Lena as family, helps her by freeing her from her bonds. Finally, Alex, who loves Lena as a lover, helps her by driving her away, to the border fence. In the end, Alex loves Lena enough to sacrifice himself for her. He is more concerned about her survival and escape than about his own life. This highlights the central element of love: caring more about another than about one's self. Those who have undergone the cure do not empathize. They do not feel for others. They have lost the ability to help and care for their children and their families. Alex, on the other hand, is free to love, to have empathy, and to sacrifice himself for another.

Characters

Lena Tittle/Halloway

Lena is the main character and narrator of the novel. The reader is privy to all her thoughts and feelings as the novel progresses and can see her attitudes change. Lena is an emotional girl of seventeen. She is under the cloud of her mother's supposed suicide. Lena sees herself as ordinary and short, someone who blends into the background and who is unlovable. She sees her mother's suicide as an abandonment and both her sister Rachel and her aunt Carol are distant from her. Due to this, Lena feels she isn't worthy of being loved and has low self-esteem. She even questions whether her best friend Hana would be happier with another best friend.

When Lena first meets Alex, her life is governed by fear. She is afraid to be hurt and afraid to break the rules. She is afraid of losing Hana and afraid of the consequences of Hana's rebellion. Alex's love, though, instills self-worth in Lena. She comes to believe that she is worth loving because Alex loves her and because her mother didn't commit suicide, consciously abandoning her.

Lena feels betrayed by the society, which she realizes has lied to her all her life. Lena's visit to the Wilds shows her that the truth isn't the same as what the government has always told her. The blitz was a horrible, bloody event. When she hears a Regulator kick to death her neighbor's dog, she realizes the results of the lack of empathy that the procedure causes. She herself is beaten by regulators for breaking curfew and being in love, things she doesn't consider crimes. By the end of the novel, Lena has changed. She escapes the city of Portland physically, but she also mentally escapes her fear and confinement.

Alex

Alex grew up as an orphan in the Wilds but moved to Portland, Maine when he was ten years old. He was given a fake identity and a family of sympathizers to live with, but he still considers the Wilds his home. Alex moved into the city to participate in the resistance, which he believes is important. He tells Lena that there are many more sympathizers and Invalids than she thinks. Alex works as a part-time security guard at the labs and

Alex first sees Lena when she is on a run, and she approaches the Governor statue, jumping and celebrating. She reminds him of the birds: wild and free. Alex is immediately attracted to Lena. When they meet at the labs, he makes an appointment to meet her again. Alex tells Lena that he is not "cured" but instead is from the Wilds with fake scars. Lena is scared away, and Alex is worried that she might hate him.

Lena doesn't see Alex again until she tries to warn Hana of a raid and Alex ends up saving Lena from the Regulators. After that experience, Lena and Alex are inseparable.



Alex loves Lena and feels she is beautiful, and his love gives her self-esteem she's never had before. Alex is patient with her and never demanding. He realizes that he may have seen Lena's mother in the Crypts, and he brings Lena to the Crypts to find out if she's there, believing that she needs to know the truth. Alex helps Lena try to escape when she is caught and he sacrifices himself to let her get away.

Hana

Hana is Lena's best friend. She is beautiful and comes from a rich and wealthy family and when she gets her evaluations, she is matched with the mayor's son. Hana is rebellious and outspoken by nature. She finds underground internet sites that link to illegal music and chat rooms where sympathizers and invalids posts.

Hana starts going to illegal parties, and this causes a rift between Hana and Lena. However, as Lena falls in love and begins realizing that the procedure is wrong, Hana and Lena become friends again. Hana collaborates with Lena to make excuses for Lena to hang out with Alex during the summer, and she hangs out with Lena and Hana. However, when Lena asks Hana to run away to the Wilds with her and Alex, Hana refuses. She is too frightened to run away from the world she knows and instead will go through the mandatory "cure."

Rachel

Lena's older sister Rachel has had the procedure and is married. Ever since the procedure, Rachel has been distant, only coming to visit out of familial obligation.

Aunt Carol

Aunt Carol is Lena's aunt. Carol took in Lena and her sister Rachel after their mother's supposed suicide.

Uncle William

Uncle William is Carol's husband and Lena's uncle. He owns a store where Lena works part-time.

Lena's Mother

Lena's mother supposedly killed herself when Lena was young. Her mother had the procedure three times but was never successfully cured. Lena discovers that her mother did not kill herself, but was imprisoned in the Crypts. By the time Lena goes to the Crypts, though, her mother has escaped.

Gracie

Gracie is Lena's cousin's younger daughter who has lived with Lena's Aunt Carol since Gracie's father disappeared before his trial as a sympathizer and her mother died from a heart attack. Gracie never speaks, and most people think she is mentally handicapped. Lena, though, knows that Gracie can speak and quietly grieves for the loss of her mother. She often crawls into Lena's bed at night when Lena is having nightmares, and she is aware that Lena is sneaking out at night. In the end of the novel, Gracie unties Lena to allow her to escape.

Jenny

Jenny is Lena's cousin's older daughter who has lived with Lena's Aunt Carol since Jenny's father disappeared before his trial as a sympathizer and her mother died from a heart attack.

Marcia

Marcia is Lena's cousin who had to move in with Lena's Aunt Carol when her husband was accused of being a sympathizer and disappeared before his trial. Because of the procedure, Marcia was never able to make an emotional connection with her children and disliked having children. Shortly after her husband's disappearance, Marcia died of a heart attack.

Brian Scharff

Brian Scharff is the boy that Lena is paired with by the government and supposed to marry.

Regulators

Regulators include paid government officials meant to enforce laws as well as part-time volunteers who participate in patrols and raids. Regulators carry clubs, mace, and guns, and they use vicious attack dogs. The regulators are tyrannical and violent and Lena is horrified when a group of regulators kicks to death her neighbor's dog.

Invalids

Invalids are adults who have not had the procedure that is supposed to cure them of the deliria. Invalids live in the Wilds, but some of them live underground in the cities, like Alex.

Objects/Places

The Wilds

The Wilds are the supposedly unpopulated area outside of the enclosed metropolitan areas of the U.S. Invalids live in the Wilds.

The Fence

The border of Portland, Maine is surrounded by a guarded fence topped with barbed wire and electrified. However, unknown to most people in Portland, the power is often turned off throughout much of the fence.

37 Brooks

37 Brooks is an abandoned house where Lena, Alex, and Hana hang out during the summer.

Back Cove

Back Cove is a relatively unpopular Portland beach where Alex and Lena often go.

Scars

The procedure leaves a scar on people's necks. Alex has fake scars so that people will think he has had the procedure and is "cured."

The Governor

The Governor is Lena and Hana's name for a statue that was a stop on many of their runs. The Governor's hand used to hold something, but now has an empty niche. Lena, Hana, and Alex use the niche to communicate through notes.

The Labs

The labs are a government complex in Portland, Maine where the evaluations are held and where the procedure is administered.

The Necklace

Lena's mother wears a distinctive necklace made from a unique military medal, a silver dagger, made especially for her husband's father. Lena finds the necklace in her mother's empty cell, confirming that her mother was alive in the Crypts while Lena thought she had killed herself.

Ward Six

Ward Six is the ward in the Crypts prison where political prisoners are kept.

The Tunnel

Lena's mother escapes from the Crypts prison by digging a tunnel in the wall of her cell. The tunnel is the "O" in a large carved word "LOVE."

The Stop-N-Save

Lena's Uncle William runs the Stop-N-Save grocery store, and Lena works there part-time. She meets with Alex and Hana in the back room.

The Book of Shhh

The Book of Shhh is a government book combining religion and propaganda that defines how people should live in the society of the novel.

Themes

Love

Love is a primary theme of the novel. The novel explores the idea of love by imagining what would happen if love were outlawed and destroyed by society. In Lena's world, everyone goes through a procedure to stop them from loving. Though romantic love is a large part of the novel, the procedure also stops the love for friends, the love for family, the love of creating, and the love of doing. Lena loses her sister Rachel's love when Rachel has the procedure. She is no longer capable of loving. Similarly, Lena's Aunt Carol can't love her. Carol can't give Lena support or help. She can't empathize and understand Lena's emotions. Even with her family, Lena is alone.

Lena knows that when she and Hana get the operation, they will lose their friendship and the love between them as friends. Hana will no longer have feelings for Lena, and Lena won't feel for Hana. At one point, Lena thinks how dangerous love is, even between friends. The idea of losing Hana is painful. Even though the operation is what will destroy their friendship, Lena at first looks to the operation as the thing that will take away the pain of their friendship ending.

The love between Alex and Lena is also important and becomes the most important part of Lena's life. It shows Lena that she is worthwhile and lovable. It builds her self-esteem. Love is a healing force for Lena, and the procedure's goal is to kill that healing force and make it impossible. Love is dangerous because it can lead to pain, but without love, life is empty and as empty as Carol's dreams of towers of dishes.

Fear

As the novel begins, Lena is mired in fear. Fear is all around her. The government keeps people from rebelling through fear. Objecting to the government's systems is punishable by life in prison or summary execution. Houses are subject to random raids, where the raiders can do anything from physically abusing people to destroying their property. Electrified fences surround the city, and in fact, surround every city.

Lena's personal fears go deeper than fear of the government. She fears that she is unlovable. She fears that no one could ever care about her. She fears reaching out into the world and making the connections that have been missing in her life ever since her mother's death. Since her mother abandoned her, she fears that everyone will abandon her.

Fear, in the novel, is the opposite of love. As Lena acquires love, she loses fear. She realizes that fear is controlling her and taking away her ability to live. She sees the procedure to remove love as a way to give in to fear. The procedure takes away the pain of love, so the only reason for it is giving in to the fear of pain. Of course, the government adds an additional motive for the procedure: fear of the government's

tyranny. In the end of the novel, Lena overcomes both her personal fears of being unlovable and her fears of the government. She is able to escape by being stronger than fear.

Freedom and Tyranny

The government in the novel is a tyrannical one where freedoms are oppressed. The government uses propaganda to control people. It formulates religion to its own needs, creating stories that illustrate the need for the "cure" and the abolition of emotions. It also formulates history to its own needs, by portraying the blitz as a heroic and triumphant achievement. It even formulates science to its own needs, by defining love as a disease, despite any realistic definition of disease. The government also, of course, uses the media for its own purposes, such as when they cover up the protest at the evaluations by pretending that it's a shipping error. Propaganda serves to control people and to keep them from making choices, but it is far from the only tool the government uses to destroy freedom.

The government uses force in the form of guards, electrified fences, regulators, raids, summary executions, and the Crypts. The people of Portland are carefully regulated through curfews and segregation of men and women. The social structures are also strictly controlled. Men have jobs, while women take care of homes and families. No one is free to choose a career or a spouse. Everyone must undergo the procedure, and everyone is assigned to a life. Every aspect of life is controlled.

In opposition to the controlled world of Portland, the Wilds represent freedom. One of the things that Alex finds attractive about Lena is that she seems free, when she is celebrating her run to the General. She reminds him of the birds flying overhead. Alex hates the tyrannical imprisonment of Portland. He longs for freedom: the open sky, the lack of walls, and the ability to create one's own family and life.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first person in the present tense from Lena's point of view. The narrator is always in the "now" of the novel, telling what is happening and how she is feeling at the moment. As a narrator, Lena communicates her emotions and her experiences of the world. The reader travels along on her inner journey with her, seeing how fearful she is in the early parts of the novel, and how her fears change as she is exposed to love.

Lena is emotional and poetic and the reader experiences her emotions because of the novel's first-person point of view. While little may be happening in the world around Lena, in her inner world, she is experiencing fear, trauma, or excitement. Lena describes her emotions and perceptions in detail. The house takes on a life of its own as Lena sneaks out at night for the first time. On Lena's first, uneventful trip over the supposedly electrified fence, the trip the reader takes is in Lena's imagination, as she fearfully pictures what might happen.

Lena's point of view changes from the beginning to the end of the novel, so the reader sees both perspectives. At the beginning of the novel, Lena experiences emotional pain and looks forward to the procedure that will cure her. She is naive and believes in the propaganda that the government has fed to her. At the end of the novel, Lena has experienced love and will resist the procedure with every fiber of her being. She sees the lies the government propagates. Because the reader travels on this journey with Lena, her awakening also wakes the reader to the issues of tyranny and freedom, fear, and love that the novel addresses.

Setting

The novel is set in Portland, Maine at an undisclosed time. The world is very different from our familiar world. The government is tyrannical, controlling every aspect of people's lives. The cities are surrounded by guards and electrified fences and no one is allowed outside designated metropolitan areas. The U.S. is entirely cut off from the rest of the world, with completely closed borders. The areas outside the fences, the Wilds, are supposedly unoccupied, but in reality, large communities of Invalids exist.

The setting of the novel is a dystopia, a fictional society where the government and structures of society are dysfunctional and harmful. The center of the dystopia is a mandatory procedure that removes the ability to love, but the government's tyranny affects every aspect of life, including religion, history, and science. The city of Portland is only a relatively small community within the large U.S., but it serves as a microcosm of the dysfunctional society.



Within Portland, the characters find niches away from the prying government: beaches, abandoned houses, and the store room of Lena's father's store. These niches are small puddles of freedom. Portland, however, is primarily a place of fear and imprisonment. The Wilds stands in contrast, as a place of freedom and love. When Lena goes into the Wilds with Alex, their ceiling is the night sky. There is nothing holding them in or binding them.

Language and Meaning

The language of *Delirium* is rich with metaphor, simile, personification, and descriptive language. The author focuses on Lena's feelings and emotions - the part of her character that the society threatens to remove. Lena's feelings and emotions drive the story. She is at first driven by fear and later driven by love. Her emotions are why she wants the procedure at the beginning of the novel, and they are the reason she turns against the procedure and the society by the end of the novel. Often, the narrator will describe her feelings, imagination, and environment, when little is happening outside her head. The house, the streets, and the world come to life in Lena's mind and therefore in her narration.

Lena says that Rachel looks at her as if she's a taxidermy specimen, that the night is alive with moving shadows, and that Hana's freckles look like collapsing constellations. Lena's use of poetic language emphasizes her romantic and emotional nature, the part of her that said gray was her favorite color at her first evaluation. Lena is drawn to music and poetry, which is why she is greatly affected by the music she hears at the illegal party and why she loves the poetry that Alex reads to her during their trip to the wilds. She has a natural flare for language and description that comes across in her narration. It seems natural that Lena would fall in love and be drawn into passion. She is naturally a passionate person.

Structure

The novel is divided into twenty-seven short chapters and each chapter begins with a quotation. Most of these quotations illustrate the government's propaganda that pervades the society, helping build up a picture of the world that Lena inhabits. The quotations characterize love as a sickness, show how the government has rewritten religion to its own purposes, and show the pervasiveness of the government's propaganda.

Over the course of the novel, Lena changes from a fearful girl who is mired in society's strictures and lacks confidence in herself to a rebel who knows love and breaks free from society to escape to the Wilds. The novel begins with Lena deeply rooted in her propaganda-filled world. She is first tempted to another, underground world, by her friend Hana. Lena resists at every step, though. Hana and then Alex draw her deeper into the other world, and when Lena falls in love with Alex, she steps over to that world. Falling in love marks a turning point in Lena's life.

The second turning point in Lena's life and in the novel comes when Lena finds out that her mother has not committed suicide, but instead has been held in the Crypts and has recently escaped. This incident pushes Lena to decide to run away to the Wilds, completing her character arc. The climax approaches when her plans fall apart because the regulators discover the house at 37 Brooks. This leads to Lena's capture and then to the climax of her escape.

Quotes

"Many people are afraid of the procedure. Some people even resist. But I'm not afraid. I can't wait." (Chapter 1, p. 5).

"My aunt has always talked about marriage with words straight out of *The Book of Shhh*, words like duty, responsibility, and perseverance." (Chapter 3, p. 14-15).

"On night like that—although it is wrong and illegal—I think of those strange and terrible words, I love you, and wonder what they would taste like in my mouth, try to recall their lilting rhythm on my mother's tongue." (Chapter 5, p. 33-34).

"We'll be adults—cured, tagged and labeled and paired and identified and placed neatly on our life path, perfectly round marbles set to roll down even, well-defined slopes." (Chapter 7, p. 66).

"This music ebbs and flows, irregular, sad. It reminds me, weirdly, of watching the ocean during a bad storm, the lashing, crashing waves and the spray of sea foam against the docks; the way it takes your breath away, the power and the hugeness of it." (Chapter 9, p. 89).

"Still, I take precautions, determined not to make one false step, determined to prove to myself that I'm not like my mother—that the thing with Alex was a fluke, a mistake, a horrible, horrible accident." (Chapter 11, p. 124).

"All I can picture are the raiding parties—sometimes as many as fifty in a single night—swirling around Portland, swarming it, surrounding it like water cascading around a whirlpool, sweeping up anyone and everyone they can find and accuse of misbehavior or disobedience, and even people they can't." (Chapter 13, p. 143).

"As Alex walks through the store, I think that there's an invisible thread tethering us together, and somehow it makes me feel more powerful than ever before." (Chapter 15, p. 167).

"I lie so often and so easily now." (Chapter 17, p. 190).

"Safety, happiness, stability: what I've wanted my whole life." (Chapter 19, p. 221).

"The smell that hits us as we enter nearly jettisons me backward—out the door, though time, back to fourth grade." (Chapter 21, p. 238).

"I tilt my head back against the brick, feel the world swaying, a ship cut loose from its mooring." (Chapter 23, p. 256).

"She's looking at me like I'm the crazy one, the dangerous one." (Chapter 25, p. 277).

Topics for Discussion

What could the Invalids do to have a more effective resistance?

How do Lena's emotions affect her decisions?

How does the procedure affect people's identities? Are they the same person after the procedure or are they different people? Why?

Why does Alex, although he wants to run away to the Wilds with Lena, object when Lena finally decides she wants to go?

How does the government in the story manipulate science and religion? How does the government use propaganda and censorship?

Why doesn't Hana want to run away to the Wilds? Why does she choose to submit to the procedure?

Why does Alex sacrifice himself at the end of the novel?

Is the procedure that the society imposes inherently wrong? Would it be acceptable if the procedure was voluntary and people could choose whether or not to submit to it?