

# **Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead Study Guide**

**Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead  
by Bert V. Royal**

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# Plot Summary

*Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* by Bert V. Royal is a play about a teenage boy, CB, who begins to question the existence of an afterlife after his dog dies. Unable to find solace from his friends after his dog's death, CB turns to an artistic classmate, but their rekindled friendship pushes the bounds of what CB's friends are willing to accept, forcing CB to consider who he wants to be. *Dog Sees God* is a touching and thought-provoking play about being different in a school filled with people who all pretend to be the same.

Throughout the play, CB writes to his pen pal who has never responded. CB and his sister hold a funeral for their dog that was put down after contracting rabies, but they argue about who should say a prayer for the dog. When CB questions his pothead friend Van about where people go after they die, Van tells CB he has recently converted to Buddhism and believes in reincarnation and nirvana. CB's friend Matt believes that the dead return to a vagina that does not belong to their mother. At lunch, Marcy and Tricia discuss Marcy's upcoming party, and after they tell CB that his dog is now maggot food, CB goes to the music room where he listens to Beethoven play the piano and laments his dog's death until Beethoven throws a fit because CB is interrupting the only peaceful time in his day. Beethoven tells CB about how he is bullied every day, blaming CB for not stopping it, but eventually, the two reconcile and agree to reestablish their friendship. Sitting next to Beethoven as he plays, CB kisses him.

Everyone is drunk at Marcy's party, but when Beethoven arrives, Matt torments and teases him for being homosexual, insisting he should leave. CB stands up for Beethoven and kisses him in front of everyone before they flee. Beethoven is distraught that Matt kissed him in front of everyone, but when CB suggests that Beethoven should kiss him, Beethoven does. Furious that Beethoven is messing with his best friend's head, Matt vows to make Beethoven pay. CB visits Van's sister at the mental institution, and when he tells her about having sex with Beethoven after the party, she is proud of him for being different and makes him promise not to apologize. As Matt continues raging about CB and Beethoven, Tricia suggests that Matt is in love with CB. CB is ready to accept that he loves Beethoven, but Beethoven needs time to get used to the idea of CB being his boyfriend, though he cannot stop grinning after CB leaves him alone. Matt visits Beethoven in the music room to harass and threaten him; however, when Beethoven refuses to stay away from CB, Matt slams his fingers in the piano lid.

During a class counseling session to discuss their feelings about Beethoven's suicide, Marcy and Tricia lament their friend's death, but CB is furious at Beethoven for leaving without saying goodbye. He mocks the others' sorrow over losing their "good friend" that they tormented for years before storming out. CB's sister confronts CB later, claiming she knows that CB loved Beethoven, but CB insists he was just going through a phase. His sister encourages him to be different, and CB confesses that he feels like he is a figment of someone else's imagination, unable to make his own decisions. CB finally receives a response from his pen pal, C. S., telling him to stay strong and writing about a new boy who moved near him, his home supposedly being the afterlife, who plays the

piano and is caring for a dog that sings along, presumably Beethoven and CB's dog. CB cries for his dog, his friend and himself.



# Section 1: Dear Pen Pal & Canis Exequiae

## Section 1: Dear Pen Pal & Canis Exequiae Summary

*Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* by Bert V. Royal is a play about a teenage boy, CB, who begins to question the existence of an afterlife after his dog dies. Unable to find solace from his friends after his dog's death, CB turns to an artistic classmate, but their rekindled friendship pushes the bounds of what CB's friends are willing to accept, forcing CB to consider who he wants to be. *Dog Sees God* is a touching and thought-provoking play about being different in a school filled with people who all pretend to be the same.

In "Dear Pen Pal," CB addresses his pen pal to whom he has not written in a few years and who never wrote back when he was a child. CB's dog, a beagle he had for as long as he can remember, died. Last month, the dog did not come when CB called. He saw blood in the doghouse that belonged to a little yellow bird his dog played with like they were best friends, and the dog looked at CB sadly when CB saw what he had done. When the dog snapped at CB, CB's parents put the dog to sleep, and the center returned the dog's corpse in a cardboard box. CB's sister enters in a black wedding dress, joining CB as he erects a wooden cross on a mound of dirt.

In "Canis Exequiae," as CB and his sister stare quietly at the wooden cross, CB's sister suggests they should say a prayer, but neither of them wants to do it, with CB claiming there is no point since the dog is already dead. His sister reminds him of the next life, claiming they should pray to Hecate, the Wiccan goddess of death and reincarnation, to make the dog human so they can meet him and become friends. Mocking his sister for her newfound Wiccan belief, CB tells her to find an identity. In response, she tells him that he is always the same which is nothing to brag about; she will not tell him how to live his life if he does not tell her how to live hers. After an argument about who the dog belonged to, CB yells at his sister to just say the prayer, but she tells him that he can say it since it was his dog before storming off.

## Section 1: Dear Pen Pal & Canis Exequiae Analysis

When CB address his pen pal in "Dear Pen Pal," he notes that though his pen pal never responded, he has found writing his pen pal to be therapeutic since he is the one person who does not judge. The lack of response had been annoying when CB was young, but now he is glad his pen pal will not respond. Since this play is the author's imagining of the "Peanuts" comic strip characters as teenagers, it is important to note that CB is supposed to be Charlie Brown's teenaged counterpart. As such, his dog that dies is Snoopy, and the little yellow bird is meant to be Woodstock. Since his dog looked like he needed him, CB reached into the doghouse, pulling his hand back when his dog



snapped at him. CB's parents called a center who took the dog away and put him to sleep, returning his corpse in a cardboard box. "When my dog died, that was when the rain cloud came back and everything went to hell" (page 8). CB's sister, whose name is Sally in the comic strip, joins him as he erects a wooden cross, foreshadowing the dog's funeral.

"Canis Exequiae" fulfills the earlier foreshadowing as CB and his sister have a funeral for their dead dog. As they stare at their dog's cross, CB chides his sister for smoking when she offers him a cigarette. When CB's sister suggests they should say a prayer, they argue about who will say the prayer, leading to CB mocking his sister for constantly changing her identity while she insists that is better than his habit of never changing at all. CB is surprised that there is not a bigger turnout, but his sister is embarrassed to learn that CB invited their friends, reminding him that it was just a dog that died. CB argues that it was his dog, and when his sister reminds him that the dog belonged to her also, he insists their dog barely tolerated her. CB's sister is furious, and when he tells her to just say the prayer, she refuses since it was his dog before storming off.



## **Section 2: Nirvana, Where Swine Live & The Pianist and the Platypus**

### **Section 2: Nirvana, Where Swine Live & The Pianist and the Platypus Summary**

In "Nirvana," CB asks his best friend, Van, what happens after death, as Van smokes a joint. Since he recently became Buddhist, Van explains the corporeal body is the source of all suffering and the goal is liberation from the body into nothingness or nirvana. Realizing CB's interest in the afterlife is tied to his dog's death, Van instructs CB to let go of childhood things, reminding him that CB and Van's sister burned Van's blanket to teach him that lesson, though Van smoked the ashes so he could be connected with his blanket forever. CB asks about Van's sister and learns the doctors say she is getting better. Van wants to discuss a happier topic, but neither of them can think of anything to talk about.

In "Where Swine Live," Matt encourages CB to attend Marcy's party on Saturday, suggesting Marcy would have sympathy sex with CB because of his dog's death. When CB questions Matt's beliefs of the afterlife, Matt proposes that they return to a vagina that does not belong to their mothers. Matt calls Beethoven derogatory slurs regarding his belief that Beethoven is a homosexual when he walks by, causing CB's sister to yell at Matt, angering him when she asks where swine live. As CB calms Matt down, Matt insists his anger is caused by Beethoven who looks at him like he loves him.

In "The Pianist and the Platypus," CB's sister tries to comfort Beethoven who is uninterested in her sympathy, and he also refuses her attempts to make plans with him during the weekend, insisting he has to go as she attempts to make plans with him several times, even telling him about her one-woman show, "Cocooning the Platypus."

### **Section 2: Nirvana, Where Swine Live & The Pianist and the Platypus Analysis**

In "Nirvana," CB sits on a brick wall with Van, Linus in the comic strip, who smokes a joint, refusing when Van offers it to him. When Van apologizes for failing to attend the dog's funeral, CB asks what he thinks happens after death, and claiming he recently became Buddhist, Van shares his belief in nirvana, the liberation from the body into nothingness. Being nothing is not depressing because nothing is still something. Wondering why CB is suddenly interested in the afterlife, Van tells him he needs to let go of childhood things, reminding CB how CB and Van's sister burned Van's blanket to teach him that lesson. Van was furious, but the point is that life goes on even without things that have been there since the beginning. CB reminds Van that they gave him the ashes from his blanket, and Van admits he smoked them so that he and his blanket



would be one forever. When CB asks about Van's sister, Van tells him the doctors say she is getting better, but he suggests talking about something else because their conversation is a downer. Silence follows when CB asks what they can talk about that is happy, indicating that neither of them can think of anything happy to discuss.

In "Where Swine Live," Matt, known as Pig-Pen in the comic, joins CB as the school bell rings on Thursday, asking if CB is planning to attend Marcy's party on Saturday since there will be lots of virgins there. He suggests CB should get into Marcy since she is into him. Matt also suggests that CB can get sympathy sex because of his dog's death. When CB asks what Matt thinks happens after death, Matt suggests they return to a vagina, like the reverse of birth, only it does not belong to their mothers. As Matt yells about how much he loves sex, Beethoven, known as Schroeder in the comic, enters, and Matt calls him a fairy and threatens him. CB's sister yells at Matt and chides CB for letting his friend talk to people like that. She says they are disgusting, and when she asks Matt where swine live, he is enraged because he hates his former nickname. CB calms Matt down, and Matt claims his anger is caused by Beethoven who looks at him like he is in love; Matt hates that kid.

In "The Pianist and the Platypus," CB's sister catches up with Beethoven and tells him not to let those guys get to him. She asks him to sit with her at lunch, but he claims he has stuff to do. CB's sister suggests Beethoven should join drama club where she, the only member, is working on a one-woman show, "Cocooning the Platypus." Uninterested, Beethoven insists he needs to go, and when CB's sister asks if he is going to Marcy's party on Saturday night, he tells her he would rather gnaw off his left arm. He does not even respond when she asks him to hang out with her this weekend. This scene indicates that CB's sister is interested in Beethoven, but her interest is unrequited, reinforcing the idea that Beethoven may be a homosexual.





## Section 3: Spork

### Section 3: Spork Summary

At lunch, Tricia and Marcy make fun of fat Frieda as they get drunk on vodka and Kahlua. When Tricia expresses amazement at the ingenuity of the spork's invention, Marcy explains when and why it was invented, claiming she was part of a government experiment in elementary school that turned her into a genius. She mocks Tricia for being gullible when Tricia believes her, explaining she researched the spork online since Tricia always talks about it when she is drunk. CB and Matt join the girls who express sympathy at the death of CB's dog, but when they laughingly tell him that his dog is nothing but maggot food since they do not believe in the afterlife for dogs, CB leaves because he realizes the conversation is impossible. As Tricia flirts with Matt, Matt tells Marcy that CB will come to her party if she sleeps with him, but disgusted when she takes food from his plate, he leaves the girls who mock him. Standing on top of the table with their sporks in the air, Marcy and Tricia decide to revolt. When Van enters and asks what they are doing, they laugh and fall off the table as they scream, "We're revolting" (page 20).

### Section 3: Spork Analysis

In the cafeteria at lunch, Tricia and Marcy, known as Peppermint Patty and Marcie in the comic, respectively, sit at an empty table as Tricia complains about failing Mr. Von Pfefferkorn's Literature class, claiming he must be gay or she would not be failing. She thinks God is punishing her for performing oral sex on Craig Kovelky, Frieda's boyfriend, when she was drunk. Adding vodka and Kahlua to their milk cartons, the girls mock Frieda for being fat and supposedly bulimic. As they toast to tater tots, Tricia is amazed by the cleverness of the spork, so Marcy tells her all about its invention, claiming she is the smartest person in the world because she was part of a government experiment in elementary school that made kids into super geniuses but the side effect was that it made them extremely horny. Tricia is amazed, but Marcy laughs at her friend for being gullible. She researched the invention of the spork online because Tricia always mentions it when they get drunk at school. Finishing their drinks and pouring vodka into their cartons, Marcy and Tricia try to act normal when CB and Matt join them. Tricia apologizes to CB for not attending his dog's funeral, trying to be polite by saying the dog is in a better place, but she does not believe dogs really go to heaven. Both girls laugh about dogs being gross, claiming they want to go to hell if dogs go to heaven. Realizing the conversation is impossible, CB leaves. Tricia flirts with Matt, asking if he is coming to Marcy's party, and when Marcy tells him to bring CB, Matt claims CB will only come if Marcy performs oral sex on him. Matt is disgusted when Marcy grabs tater tots from his plate and chews with her mouth open, so he leaves as the girls laugh about him being a germophobe and his antipathy toward his former nickname, Pig-Pen. Regardless, Tricia plans to have sex with Matt at Marcy's party. The

girls climb on top of the table with sporks in the air to revolt against Frieda, Mr. Von Pfefferkorn and tater tots.



## Section 4: A Segue I Suppose & The Viper's Nest

### Section 4: A Segue I Suppose & The Viper's Nest Summary

In "A Segue I Suppose," CB continues his letter to his pen pal, describing how he heard a simple song as he passed the music room. He suggests that maybe Fredric Chopin had a dog and wrote the song because his dog died too. CB gets lost in the song.

In "A Viper's Nest," CB is mesmerized as Beethoven plays Chopin's "Prelude No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 28/4," but Beethoven objects to CB's presence when he notices him. As Beethoven resumes playing, CB launches into a monologue about his dead dog and his recent fascination with the afterlife, causing Beethoven to fly into a rage that CB would dare turn to him after not talking to him for years. Beethoven tells CB about how he has been bullied and tormented for years because everyone thinks he is gay, but Beethoven does not know if he is gay because he has never had sex. CB admits that he did not know what to say to Beethoven after Beethoven's father was arrested, and though CB did not actually bully Beethoven, he apologizes for allowing it to happen. After the two agree to forgive past grievances and become friends again, CB asks what Beethoven thinks about the afterlife. Beethoven believes pets go to heaven because "there has to be some reward for having to live through this" (page 24), quoting the Bible as proof that there are animals in heaven. Smiling at Beethoven, CB heads to the piano and plays the bass part of "Heart and Soul," but as Beethoven joins in with the treble part, CB stops, causing Beethoven to stop also. CB stares at Beethoven and kisses him long and passionately until Beethoven pulls away. CB stares at Beethoven for a moment before leaving the music room where Beethoven sits, confused and out of sorts.

### Section 4: A Segue I Suppose & The Viper's Nest Analysis

"A Segue I Suppose" shows CB continuing his letter to his pen pal as he is entranced by a song while passing the music room, foreshadowing his pending affiliation with Beethoven.

In "The Viper's Nest," Beethoven's black eye is visible as he plays Chopin's "Prelude No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 28/4" on the piano. Unseen, CB enters and is hypnotized by the music, but when his silent tears turn into an audible sob, Beethoven stops and spins around to look at CB who tries to pull it together. Beethoven objects that no one is supposed to be in here, but praising Beethoven's talents, CB asks to listen. As Beethoven resumes playing, CB tells him about his dog dying from rabies, how he could not think of anything to say at the funeral and how he wanted closure but cannot stop



wondering what happened to his dog. Slamming his fist on the piano, Beethoven points out that CB has not talked to him in years except to call him a fag and dislocate his shoulder, but now CB is interrupting the only happy time he has during the day to whine about his dog; Beethoven does not care about the dog so CB should just leave. CB objects that he was only playing with Beethoven when he dislocated his shoulder in shop last spring, but Beethoven would prefer if CB just admitted that he does not like him. Beethoven has not eaten in the cafeteria for two and a half years because food gets thrown at him, and he has not used the bathroom on campus since the time his head was slammed into the wall. CB was there and did not stop it. CB may not be the bully, but Beethoven thinks it is worse that CB stands by and lets it happen. When CB suggests maybe it would be better if Beethoven did not act so gay, Beethoven asks how he acts gay since he does nothing except play the piano. He does not want to talk to CB. CB claims that is why Beethoven does not have friends, but Beethoven reminds him that they both know why he does not have friends. After CB calls him melodramatic, Beethoven mocks CB for crying about his dog and tells him to shut up, shoving and hitting CB until CB laughs because he was scared of Beethoven for a second. CB admits he deserved it though. Beethoven does not understand: CB was one of his best friends; they all were. CB apologizes for not being there for Beethoven, but they did not know what to say after Beethoven's father got arrested. The boys call a truce, and CB asks if Beethoven is gay, but Beethoven does not know because he has never had sex since what happened with his dad does not count; combined with the information that Beethoven's father was arrested and that is when Beethoven's friends began to alienate him, this indicates that Beethoven's father sexually molested him. Recalling how his dog used to howl when Beethoven played the piano as if he was singing along, he asks what Beethoven thinks happens to pets when they die. Beethoven's belief that there is an afterlife because there has to be a reward for suffering on earth foreshadows his suicide. CB worries that God will be angry at his dog for killing another living thing, but Beethoven reminds him that the dog was sick and cannot be blamed for his actions. As CB and Beethoven begin playing a duet together on the piano, CB stops and stares at Beethoven for a long moment before kissing him, and this foreshadows CB's sexual confusion concerning Beethoven which initiates the play's action. Beethoven's confusion indicates his fear as well as his own uncertainty concerning his sexuality.



## Section 5: Drama & You're Invited!

### Section 5: Drama & You're Invited! Summary

In "Drama," CB's sister gives a horrid performance of her one-woman show about the metamorphosis of a teenage caterpillar who will soon cocoon and emerge a magnificent creature. CB's sister wraps a silk scarf around herself.

In "You're Invited!", Marcy excitedly plans a party since her parents have gone to Bali without her as she grinds with Matt, Tricia and CB. Dragging Tricia away from Matt and CB, Marcy orders her to find out about CB taking her to prom. When Beethoven enters, Matt is outraged, insisting no homosexuals were invited. CB tells Matt to back off. Tricia trips and spills beer on Beethoven who throws his cup down and decides to leave, but CB grabs Matt when he lunges at Beethoven, telling him to calm down as he begs Beethoven to stay. When Matt asks if Beethoven's father is waiting for him, CB twists Matt's arm behind him back, demanding an apology. Marcy and Van tells CB to let Matt go because he is their friend, but CB insists that Beethoven is his friend also as he pushes Matt to the ground. Matt threatens to kill CB who stands next to Beethoven and tells his friends that they make him sick. After ascertaining that Beethoven is okay, CB grabs him and kisses him in front of everyone. CB's friends gasp loudly, and his sister drops her drink in mortification as the group claims they are going to vomit. Scared, Beethoven asks what CB just did, and suggesting they need to get out of here, CB grabs Beethoven's hand and they run away.

### Section 5: Drama & You're Invited! Analysis

In CB's sister's performance of "Cocooning the Platypus" in "Drama," she refuses to yield to the common fate of becoming a butterfly, deciding instead that she will become a platypus. It is not impossible, but she must wait.

In "You're Invited!", Marcy's party begins with Marcy and Tricia dancing with Matt and CB. Marcy and Tricia make fun of Frieda and accuse Matt of being dirty when he suggests they should make out. While Marcy yells at someone for defecating on the grill, Van asks CB's sister to dance horizontally, but she tells him to leave her alone because she is waiting on someone. Everyone gets increasingly drunk, but they are outraged when Beethoven arrives, especially Matt who threatens Beethoven repeatedly. When Marcy objects to having a homosexual in her house, CB points out that seven people are having sex in her parents' bed, showing her utter hypocrisy where Beethoven is concerned. CB defends Beethoven against Matt, even physically restraining his best friend when Matt tries to attack Beethoven. When CB kisses Beethoven in front of everyone, his friends are shocked and appalled; however, no one is as surprised as Beethoven who looks at CB in horror as CB drags him away from the party, suggesting they need to leave immediately which indicates that he recognizes his friends' intolerance.



## Section 6: Nocturne and The Hangover

### Section 6: Nocturne and The Hangover Summary

In "Nocturne," Beethoven chides CB for doing such a stupid thing because now he cannot go back to school. He asks what CB hoped to accomplish, so CB apologizes that Beethoven is sorry CB kissed him, but CB thought he wanted him to. As Beethoven hands CB a Chopin mix on CD, CB claims he was trying to prove a point, that it is okay to be different, but he can fix things. He had been sticking up for Beethoven like Beethoven wanted, but Beethoven argues that is not the same thing as kissing him in front of everyone. He does not know what he is going to do, yet when CB suggests Beethoven could kiss him, Beethoven throws himself on CB, and they kiss.

In "The Hangover," Marcy, Tricia and Matt sit on the ground as the rooster crows. When Matt asks if he dreamed last night, Marcy assures him that they really had a threesome, but Matt means about CB kissing Beethoven. He is annoyed because he showers with CB after practice and worries what to do if CB tries to rape him. Marcy agrees it is messed up, but she had a good time with Matt and asks who he is taking to prom to Tricia's surprise. As Matt wonders if CB and Beethoven had sex, Marcy asks him to a movie, reminding him that he told her he loved her last night. Still focused on CB and Beethoven, Matt blames Beethoven and threatens to kill him before running off to vomit. Downing some Malibu, Marcy asks Tricia if she thinks Matt is interested in her, and when Tricia asks if she wants an honest answer, Marcy asks "since when are we honest with each other" (page 30). Tricia agrees that Matt is totally interested in Marcy.

### Section 6: Nocturne and The Hangover Analysis

In "Nocturne," Beethoven is furious at CB for exposing him at the party in such a way because he knows he will be bullied even more now. CB says they can leave tonight and asks where Beethoven wants to go, but Beethoven hates CB and is not running away with him. Even though Beethoven insists that he did not want CB to kiss him, he gives him a mix CD of Chopin's music, indicating that he does have romantic feelings for CB, though he tries to deny it. CB insists he was trying to make a point, and when Beethoven laments that he does not know what to do, CB suggests Beethoven kiss him this time. The fact that Beethoven complies again indicates that he has romantic feelings for CB.

In "The Hangover," Matt focuses intently on CB kissing Beethoven at the party last night while Marcy wants to discuss their threesome with Tricia. Marcy is obviously interested in Matt at this point, betraying Tricia who liked Matt before the party, but Matt's single-minded focus on CB and Beethoven foreshadows the discovery that Matt is in love with CB. Matt ignores Marcy as she suggests they go on a date, running off to vomit as he thinks of what Beethoven has done to his best friend and vows vengeance. Marcy shows the insincerity of her friendship with Tricia when she asks if Matt is interested in

her and admits that she does not expect an honest answer. Tricia's agreement shows the lack of depth to their friendship also.



## Section 7: Fire Is Bad

### Section 7: Fire Is Bad Summary

Van's sister smiles when CB arrives to visit her. Though she will be released as soon as she admits that fire is bad, she is in no hurry because the institution has great drugs and the people out there are just as crazy as the ones in here. When CB tells her about kissing Beethoven, she is shocked that he did something different since he is always so predictable. It is hot that a straight guy kissed a gay guy, but when CB asks what if he is not straight, she insists CB is not cool enough to be gay, so he tells her he had sex with Beethoven after the party but it does not mean he is gay. He does not know if he will do it again or if he has feelings for Beethoven, but it felt good not to worry about what people thought since he has always worried about others' opinions. He admits that he cannot stop thinking about Beethoven, so Van's sister tells him that it sounds like love, joking that they are not getting back together when she is released. When CB asks why Van's sister set the little red-headed girl's hair on fire, she jokes before admitting that the girl was talking about whores in school the day after Van's sister had an abortion. Since the end of the visit is announced, Van's sister asks how people reacted, but CB cannot tell her anything since he and Beethoven left immediately after kissing. Van's sister is proud of CB for breaking through and makes him promise that he will not apologize for deviating from the norm before he leaves.

### Section 7: Fire Is Bad Analysis

Sitting behind a booth with a sign that reads "the doctor is in," Van's sister, Lucy in the comic strip, smiles when CB enters, chiding him for not visiting, but he blames her for getting thrown into solitary. She tells him she will be released when she admits fire is bad, but she is in no hurry because the institution has great drugs. CB tells her that people miss her, but Van's sister objects that the people out there are just as crazy as the ones in here. When she asks what is new and CB tells her he is failing three classes, he kissed Beethoven and his sister is Wiccan this week, Van's sister is shocked that he kissed Beethoven, but CB claims it was not a big deal that he kissed Beethoven at a party last night in front of everyone. He is okay with this but does not know what it means. He did it because he felt like it, admitting the first time was at school and the second time was at Marcy's party. Van's sister cannot believe CB did something different because he has always been so predictable; this reiterates the same thing that CB's sister told him in the beginning of the play about how he never changes. CB and Van's sister discuss what the kiss means, but CB simply liked not caring about others' opinions and does not know if he is gay or not. Van's sister insists it sounds like love since CB cannot stop thinking about Beethoven. She also expresses sympathy about CB's dog. When CB asks why she burned the little red-headed girl's hair, she jokes that she felt like it, using the same excuse CB did concerning him kissing Beethoven. Then she teases CB that she hates the girl because he used to love her before telling him she had an abortion the day before, and when Miss Puritanical Princess was talking about





the whores at school, Van's sister lit her hair on fire. She is not sorry because girls like that make her sick. CB is not sure if Van's sister is joking about the abortion, but a buzzing sound announces the end of the visit. Van's sister asks how people at school reacted to CB kissing Beethoven, but CB does not know since they left so quickly; he guesses he will find out at school tomorrow. Van's sister praises CB for acting out of the norm and encourages him to embrace being different instead of apologizing for it.



## Section 8: Our Sister of Mercy & Salisbury Steak

### Section 8: Our Sister of Mercy & Salisbury Steak Summary

In "Our Sister of Mercy," CB's sister is furious at CB because he knows how she feels about Beethoven. Van offers her a smoke, teaching her how to use a pipe, though she has never smoked pot before. He also convinces her to give him oral sex since that would be perfect revenge against her brother.

When Marcy complains about the cafeteria food in "Salisbury Steak," Tricia insists they need to discuss CB as they are sitting with Van and Matt. Van seems indifferent to what they are discussing, but Matt seethes as the girls express disgust at CB's apparent homosexuality. Unable to control his anger any longer, Matt rants about how much he hates Beethoven for messing with his best friend's head, threatening to beat Beethoven's head in. As he storms off, Tricia advises Marcy not to go after him because it is unwise to interfere with feuding lovers and it is obvious that Matt is in love with CB. Following this line of thought, Van suggests Tricia and Marcy are in love with Frieda since they always talk about her, but Marcy insists she is not a lesbian, though she is uncertain about Tricia. Tricia storms off furiously.

### Section 8: Our Sister of Mercy & Salisbury Steak Analysis

In "Our Sister of Mercy," CB's sister tells Van that she hates CB because people are treating her like a leper and she could get a gay disease, but when Van asks what this is really about, she admits that CB knows how she feels about Beethoven. Van offers her a smoke, teaching her how to use a pipe since she has never smoked pot before. Complaining that it is not fair that CB is her brother, CB's sister wonders if her parents will send CB away if she tells them about him and Beethoven. Van claims the perfect revenge would be having sex with CB's best friend since guys hate that, but since CB's sister refuses to lose her virginity to Van, Van suggests CB would be equally upset if she performed oral sex on him. She agrees, though she does not know how, so Van offers to teach her.

In "Salisbury Steak," Marcy rambles about how much she hates Salisbury steak as she sits in the cafeteria with Tricia, Van and Matt. Tricia notes that they are all dodging a certain topic which needs to be addressed since he is their friend, and when Marcy tells Van they are talking about CB, Van mentions that he saw CB in the hallway and really likes his shirt. Matt seethes as the girls look at Van like he is crazy. Marcy says that homosexuality is a sin according to the Bible, and Tricia is okay with it but it is gross.



Since no one else contributes, Tricia agrees that she hates Salisbury steaks until Matt slams his fist against the table, unable to contain his anger any longer, and claims it is not right. It is disgusting and wrong, and he hates that kid for messing with his best friend's head. He will not stand by while his best friend becomes gay, and he wants to beat Beethoven's head in. Tricia suggests Matt should try having a civilized conversation with Beethoven for the sake of his friendship with CB, and as Matt walks away furiously, Marcy suggests going after him, but Tricia says it is best not to interfere with feuding lovers, insisting that Matt is obviously in love with CB. This fulfills the earlier foreshadowing while explaining Matt's extreme homophobia as many hate most what they hate in themselves. Van disagrees, but says repressed homosexual anger is not uncommon, such as fat Frieda who is jealous and obsessed with Marcy and Tricia. Van argues that Frieda is skinny and never talks about Marcy or Tricia; they are the ones who are obsessed with Frieda. After Marcy and Tricia object that they are not lesbians, Marcy amends her claim to state that she is not at least, reminding Tricia that it was weird how she did not invite her to sleepovers with Frieda in eighth grade. Tricia claims Marcy makes weird sex noises while she sleeps, insisting she is not obsessed with or in love with Frieda, storming off because Marcy and Van are jerks. Marcy looks troubled as she asks, "This is the cool table, right" (page 40).



## Section 9: Warsaw War Song & Mal Di Luna

### Section 9: Warsaw War Song & Mal Di Luna Summary

In "Warsaw War Song," CB continues his letter, explaining how Chopin was on his way to Paris when he heard that Warsaw fell to the Russians. His response was to lock himself in his room and compose "Etude in C Minor: Opus 10, No. 12" also known as "Revolutionary Etude." It is perfect; CB and Beethoven would become revolutionaries, charging through their high school, "showing everyone how to be themselves and no one would have to apologize" (page 40). CB listens as Beethoven plays "Revolutionary Etude."

In "Mal Di Luna." CB joins Beethoven in the music room, trying to quiet Beethoven's fears by assuring him that he has put out the word that he will defend his boyfriend. Beethoven objects to the term, blushing when CB tells him he is falling in love. When CB offers him a sandwich, Beethoven insists that he needs to practice. He is trying to relieve his stress by playing the piano, and he wants to go back to the way they were. Reminding Beethoven how he did not know if he was gay the other day because he had never been with a man, CB asks what about now, but Beethoven is trying not to think about it. CB cannot think of anything else, but he becomes agitated as Beethoven squirms away when CB sits and kisses his neck. Agreeing to leave Beethoven alone, CB starts to leave but looks back at Beethoven who tells him to just give him some time. After CB leaves, Beethoven cannot stop grinning. Matt enters, unseen, until he greets Beethoven who tries to conceal his terror as Matt asks where his boyfriend is. Objecting that he had nothing to do with the other night, Beethoven begs Matt to leave him alone, but telling him to play something, Matt moves Beethoven's hands to the keys, and Beethoven plays "Moonlight Sonata." Matt asks if Beethoven and CB are a couple now and if they had sex, slamming Beethoven's head on the keys when he refuses to answer. When he asks "can't you people just keep it hidden" (page 43), Beethoven realizes Matt's secret, and when Matt threatens to kill Beethoven if he looks at CB again, Beethoven refuses, calling Matt Pig-Pen. Furious, Matt grabs Beethoven's mouth and slams the piano lid on Beethoven's hand several times as Beethoven screams into Matt's hand.

### Section 9: Warsaw War Song & Mal Di Luna Analysis

"Warsaw War Song" discusses how Chopin composed "Revolutionary Etude" after learning his city, Warsaw, had fallen to the Russians. As Beethoven plays the Etude, CB thinks that he and Beethoven will become revolutionaries, teaching everyone in the high school that it is okay to be different. This reinforces the theme of being different and shows CB's acceptance of not being just like everyone else.



In "Mal Di Luna," CB enters the music room and unpacks lunch from a brown paper sack. He is happy because it is already halfway through the day and he has only been called a queer three times. Beethoven points out that people are scared CB will beat them up, and kissing the top of Beethoven's head, CB assures him that he has already spread the word that people had better not mess with his boyfriend. Beethoven does not want a boyfriend, insisting they only shared a moment and cannot just start a relationship. CB insists people will get used to the idea, but Beethoven objects that he is not even used to the idea, blushing when CB says he is falling in love with him. CB continues to push himself on Beethoven who rebuffs him, finally saying he needs to get used to the idea and asking for time; however, after CB leaves, Beethoven grins, indicating that he is pleased with the idea of having CB as his boyfriend, even if the idea terrifies him simultaneously because he fears their peers' reactions. Matt enters and begins mocking Beethoven's relationship with CB, threatening to kill Beethoven if he looks at CB again. Realizing Matt is in love with CB, Beethoven refuses to agree to Matt's demands, insulting him further by calling him Pig-Pen, the nickname from their childhood that Matt hates so passionately. Matt angrily smashes Beethoven's hand under the piano lid, breaking it. These events foreshadow Beethoven's suicide.



## **Section 10: Taphephobia, Peer Counseling & Changing Evolution**

### **Section 10: Taphephobia, Peer Counseling & Changing Evolution Summary**

In "Taphephobia," CB continues his letter: Chopin died of tuberculosis on October 17, 1849, and both of his final requests were eventually honored. Beethoven did not leave a note so CB does not know if he had any last requests. The school bell rings.

In "Peer Counseling," CB is miserable as Marcy and Tricia express their regret over Beethoven's suicide and CB's sister claims Matt should be imprisoned, instead of suspended for one week, since his actions caused Beethoven to commit suicide. Brought out of his daze by the teacher's garbled voice, CB fumes that no one liked Beethoven before, so they should not care that he is dead now. Lots of people have tough lives but do not kill themselves. He does not care if Beethoven could no longer play the piano; "suicide is pathetic bullshit. It's weak" (page 45). When his peers berate his insensitivity, CB mocks them, suggesting his sister can pray to the witchcraft goddess to bring Beethoven back, or maybe Matt can dig him up and break a few more bones, or Van can get his sister to set Beethoven on fire so he can smoke the ashes. He storms off, leaving the others staring at the ground.

In "Changing Evolution," CB and his sister stand on opposite ends of the stage, addressing the audience. CB's sister stayed in her cocoon too long, evolving past a platypus all the way to a human, so now she must think and ask questions, make and lose friends, find and lose love. She never wanted to do these things; platypuses do not feel. CB says the sad thing is Beethoven's hands will never heal because the broken parts of a dead body cannot heal. CB's sister will always be stuck in a body that knows regret. She should have been a butterfly, but she always wanted to be a platypus. CB apologizes for his long letter as he signs it. As CB's sister looks at CB, an old, red doghouse appears, covered with cobwebs and creating a mausoleum-like presence.

### **Section 10: Taphephobia, Peer Counseling & Changing Evolution Analysis**

In "Taphephobia," CB thinks of Chopin's final requests, mentioning that he does not know if Beethoven had any final requests since he did not leave a note. This fulfills the earlier foreshadowing that Beethoven would commit suicide after Matt's abuse.

In "Peer Counseling," CB is miserable as he sits near his sister, Van, Marcy and Tricia in the classroom. When the teacher's garbled voice asks a question, Tricia claims Beethoven was very talented and she was shocked by his suicide, followed by Van who



would prefer to go by overdosing and asks what kind of pills Beethoven used. Marcy is sad that "our good friend is dead" (page 44) and wishes he had called her so she could tell him it would be okay. Marcy and Tricia show their hypocrisy by their grief since they were never nice to Beethoven. CB's sister claims Matt should be imprisoned since his actions led Beethoven to commit suicide, yet he was only suspended for one week which is unfair. The teacher's garbled voice brings CB out of his daze, and he claims the death makes him feel stupid, pointing out that no one liked Beethoven so they should not care that he is dead. CB is angry at Beethoven for being weak and killing himself, showing his grief is in the stage of anger. CB's sister yells at him for not going to Beethoven's funeral and saying goodbye, but CB argues that Beethoven did not say goodbye to him. He wishes Beethoven were here so he could shove his head in a toilet and tease him for being a homosexual. The others berate CB's insensitivity, but he tells them to stop talking because Beethoven wanted them to mourn about how much they would miss him like he was still their best friend. When his sister tells him to stop, CB mocks his sister's and Van's supposed grief, throwing in their faces the things they said about the afterlife after his dog died. In the same tone, CB tells Marcy and Tricia "here's to maggot food" (page 45) before telling the teacher that maybe after all that they can come back and talk about how they feel. The others stare at the ground, indicating shame, as CB storms out of the room.

In "Changing Evolution," CB's sister laments staying in her cocoon too long and becoming a human who must feel things that she never wanted to feel, such as grief and loss. She indicates that the reason she wanted to be a platypus was to avoid such negative emotions. Meanwhile, CB laments that Beethoven's broken hands will never heal since he is dead, apologizing for the length of his letter as he signs it. Indicating the circular nature of life, CB and his sister return to the doghouse where everything began, foreshadowing their conversation which occurs in the next, penultimate scene.



## Section 11: Brothers and Sisters & Dear CB

### Section 11: Brothers and Sisters & Dear CB Summary

In "Brothers and Sisters," CB and his sister greet each other as they climb on top of the doghouse. She asks if he is okay, claiming she knows he did not mean what he said and that he loved Beethoven, but CB insists he did mean it and that he just went through a phase but is back to normal now and wants to move forward. She apologizes for being mean about it, swearing she would have gotten used to it in time, but when she tells CB that she and he are different, unlike the others, he argues that he is like them, correcting himself that he wants to be like them. CB's sister admits that she looked up to CB when they were younger because he was different but great; she has seen that quality in him again recently. CB asks if his sister ever feels like she is not a real person because he feels like he is the product of someone's imagination and cannot think for himself because he is someone else's creation and people somewhere are laughing every time he fails. CB's sister kisses his cheek and starts to exit, but when CB asks if she thinks he is gay, she says maybe or maybe not, jokingly telling him to find an identity. Almost forgetting, CB's sister hands CB an envelope and leaves, and the wind is knocked out of CB as he looks at the envelope.

In "Dear CB," CB stares at the letter before opening it tentatively. Rain falls only on him as the rest of the characters enter and stand in a semi-circle around CB, reading the letter. Addressed to CB, the writer admits it was unexpected to receive a letter after all this time. Though CB's situation is tough, he knows CB can deal with it and promises things will get better, advising CB to be strong. The writer is sorry for CB's loss. A girl who recently came to live near CB's pen pal told him about an incident in her school where a quiet, awkward boy was bullied and tormented until he opened fire in the cafeteria, taking many lives. No one ever offered him friendship, and the girl wishes she had not turned a blind eye, wondering how differently things might have turned out if he had had only one connection. Describing his home where there is no violence, CB's pen pal challenges CB to imagine a place where everyone treats each other with kindness, love and respect. He tells CB not to concern himself with death and to enjoy life instead but never stop asking questions. He also cautions CB against bearing malice to those who left him since their only regret is not being able to tell him how they feel. They wish they could say goodbye to those they left, and they will always have this regret, even in nirvana and perfect happiness. Recently, a boy moved in down the street from CB's pen pal. He plays the piano like Beethoven, and he found and takes care of a dog who sings along. The boy often tells the pen pal of a person from where he used to live that meant more to him than anyone, and that person reminds the pen pal of CB. CB's pen pal apologizes for not being there for him, and though he may not be able to write again, he tells CB to remember that someone is thinking of him and has a vested interest in his success. He wishes he had been able to meet CB because CB is a good man, and he





tells him "maintain in your heart all that makes you who you are" (page 49). The letter is signed C. S. CB drops the letter and cries for his dog, for his friend, and for himself.

## Section 11: Brothers and Sisters & Dear CB Analysis

In "Brothers and Sisters," CB's sister tries to tell CB that she would have grown accustomed to his relationship with Beethoven, claiming she knows that CB loved him; however, CB insists that he went through a phase with Beethoven and is now back to normal. When she argues that they are different than their friends, CB claims that he is like their friends, amending his statement to the fact that he wants to be like them. This shows that CB realizes he is not like his friends, but he does not want to be different, reinforcing the theme that being different is frowned upon. CB's sister praises her brother for being different, encouraging him to regain that quality that he had when they were younger. Their conversation about feeling like a figment of someone else's imagination is ironic and comical since, as characters in the "Peanuts" strip and as characters in "Dog Sees God," they are figments of someone else's imagination. Reiterating what CB told her in the second scene, CB's sister now tells her brother to find an identity in the second to last scene of the play. Before leaving, she hands CB an envelope, foreshadowing the fact that his pen pal has finally written back.

In "Dear CB," the foreshadowing is fulfilled as CB reads the response written to him from his pen pal who responds to CB's letter for the first time. His pen pal encourages CB to be strong, promising that life will get better. He tells CB about the peaceful place he lives, seeming to be writing from the afterlife in heaven. He tells CB about a girl who recently came to live near him and how she knew a kid in her high school who was bullied and shot his peers, emphasizing the theme of the detrimental nature of bullying. CB's pen pal also tells CB that those who have left him regret not being able to tell him how they feel, and when he describes a boy who recently came to live near him, it is obvious he is describing Beethoven who mentions someone who reminds the pen pal of CB. This boy also takes care of a dog who sings along as he plays the piano, as CB and Beethoven recalled CB's dog doing when they were younger. CB's pen pal apologizes for not being there for him but promises that he will always be thinking of CB even if he cannot write again, reinforcing the idea that he is writing from the afterlife. He encourages CB to be who he is, indicating that it is okay to be different, because CB is a good man. The letter is signed C. S., an allusion to Charles M. Schulz, the creator of "Peanuts."



# Characters

## CB

CB is the main character in *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead*, and he is a parody of the teenage version of Charlie Brown from the "Peanuts" comic strip. Throughout the play, CB writes to his pen pal who has never responded. CB and his sister hold a funeral for their dog that was put down after contracting rabies, but they argue about who should say a prayer for the dog. When CB questions his pothead friend Van about where people go after they die, Van tells CB he has recently converted to Buddhism and believes in reincarnation and nirvana. CB's friend Matt believes that the dead return to a vagina that does not belong to their mother. At lunch, Marcy and Tricia discuss Marcy's upcoming party, and after they tell CB that his dog is now maggot food, CB goes to the music room where he listens to Beethoven play the piano and laments his dog's death until Beethoven throws a fit because CB is interrupting the only peaceful time in his day. Beethoven tells CB about how he is bullied every day, blaming CB for not stopping it, but eventually, the two reconcile and agree to reestablish their friendship. Sitting next to Beethoven as he plays, CB kisses him.

Everyone is drunk at Marcy's party, but when Beethoven arrives, Matt torments and teases him for being homosexual, insisting he should leave. CB stands up for Beethoven and kisses him in front of everyone before they flee. Beethoven is distraught that Matt kissed him in front of everyone, but when CB suggests that Beethoven should kiss him, Beethoven does. Furious that Beethoven is messing with his best friend's head, Matt vows to make Beethoven pay. CB visits Van's sister at the mental institution, and when he tells her about having sex with Beethoven after the party, she is proud of him for being different and makes him promise not to apologize. As Matt continues raging about CB and Beethoven, Tricia suggests that Matt is in love with CB. CB is ready to accept that he loves Beethoven, but Beethoven needs time to get used to the idea of CB being his boyfriend, though he cannot stop grinning after CB leaves him alone. Matt visits Beethoven in the music room to harass and threaten him; however, when Beethoven refuses to stay away from CB, Matt slams his fingers in the piano lid.

During a class counseling session to discuss their feelings about Beethoven's suicide, Marcy and Tricia lament their friend's death, but CB is furious at Beethoven for leaving without saying goodbye. He mocks the others' sorrow over losing their "good friend" that they tormented for years before storming out. CB's sister confronts CB later, claiming she knows that CB loved Beethoven, but CB insists he was just going through a phase. His sister encourages him to be different, and CB confesses that he feels like he is a figment of someone else's imagination, unable to make his own decisions. CB finally receives a response from his pen pal, C. S. telling him to stay strong and writing about a new boy who moved near him, his home supposedly being the afterlife, who plays the piano and is caring for a dog that sings along, presumably Beethoven and CB's dog. CB cries for his dog, his friend and himself.



## Beethoven

Beethoven, known as Schroeder in the "Peanuts" comic strip, is an outcast at school since he was sexually abused by his father. He is constantly bullied and picked on for being homosexual. Beethoven is first introduced when Matt comments on him being homosexual in the hallway, and CB's sister follows to console him, though Beethoven does his best to ignore her. When CB goes to the music room during lunch, he listens to Beethoven play the piano and laments his dog's death until Beethoven throws a fit because CB is interrupting the only peaceful time in his day. Beethoven tells CB about how he is bullied every day, blaming CB for not stopping it, but eventually, the two reconcile and agree to reestablish their friendship. Sitting next to Beethoven as he plays, CB kisses him.

Everyone is drunk at Marcy's party, but when Beethoven arrives, Matt torments and teases him for being homosexual, insisting he should leave. CB stands up for Beethoven and kisses him in front of everyone before they flee. Beethoven is distraught that Matt kissed him in front of everyone, but when CB suggests that Beethoven should kiss him, Beethoven does. Furious that Beethoven is messing with his best friend's head, Matt vows to make Beethoven pay. CB is ready to accept that he loves Beethoven, but Beethoven needs time to get used to the idea of CB being his boyfriend, though he cannot stop grinning after CB leaves him alone. Matt visits Beethoven in the music room to harass and threaten him; however, when Beethoven refuses to stay away from CB, Matt slams his fingers in the piano lid. Because Beethoven's hands are broken and he can no longer play the piano, he commits suicide by overdosing on some pills. CB's pen pal writes about a new boy who moved into his neighborhood, presumably the afterlife, who plays the piano like Beethoven and takes care of a dog that sings along.

## CB's Sister

CB's sister, Sally in the comic strip, dresses gothic in the play. She often changes her outlook on life. During the funeral for CB's dog, CB and his sister fight about who will say the prayer for the dog. She is angry at CB for kissing Beethoven because CB knows how she feels about Beethoven. CB's sister is sad about Beethoven's suicide and tells her brother that she would have eventually accepted his relationship with Beethoven.

## Van

Van, Linus in the comic strip, is CB's pothead best friend. He recently converted to Buddhism and believes in nirvana and reincarnation. Van smoked the ashes from his blanket so he and his blanket would be one forever after CB and Van's sister burned his blanket to teach him to let go of things from their childhood.



## **Matt**

Matt, Pig-Pen in the comic strip, is CB's sex-obsessed, homophobic best friend who is secretly in love with CB. He is angry when CB kisses Beethoven at Marcy's party and vows that he will make Beethoven pay. When Beethoven refuses to leave CB alone, Matt slams his fingers in the piano lid, causing Beethoven to commit suicide since he can no longer play the piano. Matt is punished by being suspended from school for one week.

## **Marcy**

Marcy, Marcie in the comic strip, is a party girl who has a crush on CB, but she goes after Matt instead after CB kisses Beethoven at her party. She is Tricia's best friend, though they are not honest with or loyal to each other. She is sad about Beethoven's suicide, though she is one of the people who bullied him for being homosexual.

## **Tricia**

Tricia, Peppermint Patty in the comic strip, is a party girl who is always drunk. She is Marcy's best friend, though they are neither honest with nor loyal to one another. Tricia makes fun of Frieda constantly, causing Van to suspect Tricia is a lesbian since she is so obsessed with Frieda after Tricia points out that Matt is obviously in love with CB. Tricia is shocked by Beethoven's suicide.

## **Van's Sister**

Van's sister, Lucy in the comic strip, is in the mental institution after setting fire to the little red-headed girl's hair. When CB visits her and tells her about kissing Beethoven in front of everyone, she is proud of him for daring to be different instead of always being so predictable, and she makes him promise not to apologize when he goes to school the next day.

## **Pen Pal**

Throughout the play, CB writes a long letter to his pen pal without expecting a response; however, at the end of the play, his pen pal finally writes back, encouraging CB to be strong in tough times and writing about where he lives, presumably the afterlife, and a new boy moving in who would appear to be Beethoven who seems to be taking care of CB's dog. CB's pen pal signs his letter CS, likely an allusion to Charles M. Schulz, the creator of the "Peanuts" comic strip.

## **CB's Dog**

CB's dog, Snoopy in the comic strip, is put down after contracting rabies and killing his best friend, a little yellow bird, Woodstock in the comic strip. The play begins with CB and his sister holding a funeral for the dog.



# Objects/Places

## CB's Letter to Pen Pal

CB writes a letter to his pen pal sporadically throughout the play, though he does not expect his pen pal to respond since he never has before. CB writes because he is upset about the death of his dog and Beethoven. He writes about Chopin, often comparing Chopin's music and life to his interactions with Beethoven. Before signing the letter, he apologizes for the length.

## Backyard

CB's dog is buried in his backyard.

## Cafeteria

Marcy and Tricia plan Marcy's party during lunch in the cafeteria. Later, Marcy, Tricia, Matt and Van discuss CB kissing Beethoven at Marcy's party, and Matt swears vengeance against Beethoven.

## Music Room

CB listens to Beethoven playing the piano in the music room during lunch. This is where he first kisses Beethoven and where he proposes that Beethoven is his boyfriend the Monday after Marcy's party. Matt visits Beethoven in the music room to threaten him, slamming Beethoven's fingers under the piano lid when Beethoven refuses to leave CB alone.

## Mental Institution

Van's sister is locked up in the mental institution after burning the little red-headed girl's hair. CB visits and tells her about kissing Beethoven at Marcy's party and having sex afterward, and she is proud of him for doing something different instead of being so predictable as usual.

## Marcy's House

Marcy throws a party at her house while her parents are on vacation in Bali. This is where CB kisses Beethoven in front of everyone, throwing Matt into a rage.



## **Classroom**

Marcy, Tricia, Van, CB and CB's sister gather in a classroom for a peer counseling session to discuss their feelings about Beethoven's suicide. CB is enraged at everyone's grief since they tormented Beethoven so much while he was alive, but he also claims that he wishes Beethoven were here so he could bully him, mocking Beethoven for yielding to the weakness of suicide.

## **Piano**

Beethoven excels at playing the piano, often practicing compositions by Chopin. When Beethoven refuses to adhere to Matt's demand that he leave CB alone, Matt smashes Beethoven's fingers beneath the piano lid, leading Beethoven to commit suicide since he can no longer play the piano.

## **CS's Letter to CB**

At the end of the play, CS finally responds to CB's letter. He encourages CB to stay strong and tells him about his home. Though he may not be able to write CB again, he tells CB to remember that there is someone who has a vested interest in his success. The signature of CS implies that CB's pen pal is Charles M. Schulz, the creator of "Peanuts".

## **CS's Home**

CS writes to CB from his home which is insinuated to be the afterlife since he describes it as a place where everyone treats each other with kindness, love and respect. He also tells CB about a boy who recently moved in down the street. He plays the piano like Beethoven, and he found and takes care of a dog who sings along. The boy often tells the pen pal of a person from where he used to live that meant more to him than anyone, and that person reminds the pen pal of CB.



# Themes

## Death

One of the most prevalent themes in this play is death. The play begins with the funeral of CB's dog. The dog was put to sleep after contracting rabies, killing his best friend, a little yellow bird, and snapping at CB. This leads to CB's preoccupation with the afterlife. During the funeral, CB's sister reminds him of the next life, claiming they should pray to Hecate, the Wiccan goddess of death and reincarnation, to make the dog human so they can meet him and become friends. When CB asks his best friend, Van, what happens after death, Van explains that, as a Buddhist, he believes that the corporeal body is the source of all suffering and the goal is liberation from the body into nothingness or nirvana. When CB questions Matt's beliefs about the afterlife, Matt proposes that they return to a vagina that does not belong to their mothers. Tricia and Marcy believe the dog is maggot food, expressing disgust at the idea of there being dogs in heaven. Continuing his letter to his pen pal, CB suggests that maybe Fredric Chopin had a dog and wrote the song because his dog died too. As he listens to Beethoven play the piano, CB launches into a monologue about his dead dog and his recent fascination with the afterlife, causing Beethoven to fly into a rage that CB would dare turn to him after not talking to him for years. After the two agree to forgive past grievances and become friends again, CB asks what Beethoven thinks about the afterlife. Beethoven believes pets go to heaven because "there has to be some reward for having to live through this" (page 24), quoting the Bible as proof that there are animals in heaven.

Much later, CB continues his letter: Chopin died of tuberculosis on October 17, 1849, and both of his final requests were eventually honored. Beethoven did not leave a note so CB does not know if he had any last requests. CB is miserable as Marcy and Tricia express their regret over Beethoven's suicide and CB's sister claims Matt should be imprisoned, instead of suspended for one week, since his actions caused Beethoven to commit suicide. Brought out of his daze by the teacher's garbled voice, CB fumes that no one liked Beethoven before, so they should not care that he is dead now. Lots of people have tough lives but do not kill themselves. He does not care if Beethoven could no longer play the piano; "suicide is pathetic bullshit. It's weak" (page 45). CB says the sad thing is Beethoven's hands will never heal because the broken parts of a dead body cannot heal. CB's pen pal finally responds to his letter, presumably from the afterlife. Though CB's situation is tough, he knows CB can deal with it and promises things will get better, advising CB to be strong. The writer is sorry for CB's loss. A girl who recently came to live near CB's pen pal told him about an incident in her school where a quiet, awkward boy was bullied and tormented until he opened fire in the cafeteria, taking many lives. No one ever offered him friendship, and the girl wishes she had not turned a blind eye, wondering how differently things might have turned out if he had had only one connection. Describing his home where there is no violence, CB's pen pal challenges CB to imagine a place where everyone treats each other with kindness, love and respect. He tells CB not to concern himself with death and to enjoy life instead but never





stop asking questions. He also cautions CB against bearing malice to those who left him since their only regret is not being able to tell him how they feel. They wish they could say goodbye to those they left, and they will always have this regret, even in nirvana and perfect happiness. Recently, a boy moved in down the street from CB's pen pal. He plays the piano like Beethoven, and he found and takes care of a dog who sings along. The boy often tells the pen pal of a person from where he used to live who meant more to him than anyone, and that person reminds the pen pal of CB. Coming full circle, the play begins with the death of CB's dog and ends with a message from the afterlife.

## Being Different

A major theme in *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* is the concept of being different. In the first scene, "Dear Pen Pal," CB notes that he enjoyed writing his pen pal because his pen pal did not judge him like other people did. At their dog's funeral, mocking his sister for her newfound Wiccan belief, CB tells her to find an identity. In response, she tells him that he is always the same which is nothing to brag about; she will not tell him how to live his life if he does not tell her how to live hers. Matt hates Beethoven for being different. Marcy and Tricia try to act normal when they are drunk at lunch. Beethoven's life is miserable because he is labeled as a homosexual. Beethoven tells CB about how he has been bullied and tormented for years because everyone thinks he is gay, but Beethoven does not know if he is gay because he has never had sex. CB admits that he did not know what to say to Beethoven after Beethoven's father was arrested, and though CB did not actually bully Beethoven, he apologizes for allowing it to happen.

In "Drama," CB's sister gives a horrid performance of her one-woman show about the metamorphosis of a teenage caterpillar who will soon cocoon and emerge a magnificent creature. CB's sister wraps a silk scarf around herself. Her play shows her willingness and desire to be different. CB finally embraces the fact that he is different at Marcy's party when he kisses Beethoven in front of all of his friends, infuriating Matt even further. When CB tells Van's sister about kissing Beethoven, she is shocked that he did something different since he is always so predictable. CB does not know if he will do it again or if he has feelings for Beethoven, but it felt good not to worry about what people thought since he has always worried about others' opinions. Van's sister is proud of CB for breaking through and makes him promise that he will not apologize for deviating from the norm before he leaves. CB decides that he and Beethoven will become revolutionaries, charging through their high school, "showing everyone how to be themselves and no one would have to apologize" (page 40).

CB is ready to accept Beethoven as his boyfriend, insisting everyone will get used to the idea, but Beethoven is scared. When Matt torments Beethoven and threatens him, insisting he stay away from CB, Beethoven refuses, and Matt breaks Beethoven's hand when he slams it in the piano lid, leading to Beethoven's suicide. In "Changing Evolution," CB's sister stayed in her cocoon too long, evolving past a platypus all the way to a human, so now she must think and ask questions, make and lose friends, find and lose love. She never wanted to do these things; platypuses do not feel. CB's sister



will always be stuck in a body that knows regret. She should have been a butterfly, but she always wanted to be a platypus. This again shows her desire to be different from society's expectations. When CB's sister approaches him about Beethoven, promising she would have gotten used to it, CB insists he was only going through a phase but is back to normal now. When she tells CB that she and he are different, unlike the others, he argues that he is like them, correcting himself that he wants to be like them. CB's sister admits that she looked up to CB when they were younger because he was different but great; she has seen that quality in him again recently. Again, insinuating that CB is different from his peers, his pen pal advises him "maintain in your heart all that makes you who you are" (page 49).

## Bullying

A major theme in this play, tied in to the concept of being different, is bullying. Many of the characters are bullied, especially when they show signs of being different. CB picks on his sister for her newfound Wiccan beliefs, and CB and Van's sister previously burned Van's blanket to teach him to let go of childhood things. A less obvious example of bullying is the way that Tricia and Marcy always make fun of Frieda, a fact that Van eventually attributes to the idea that Tricia is secretly in love with Frieda. When CB asks why Van's sister set the little red-headed girl's hair on fire, she admits that the girl was talking about whores in school the day after Van's sister had an abortion. This example makes it unclear which girl is the bully; the little red-headed girl's words are bullying while Van's sister resorts to physical bullying.

The most prevalent example of bullying is seen where it concerns Beethoven who is bullied for being a homosexual, a label that has been assigned to him because his father sexually assaulted him. While talking to CB, Matt calls Beethoven derogatory slurs regarding his belief that Beethoven is a homosexual when he walks by, claiming he hates Beethoven for looking at him as though he loves him. While listening to Beethoven play the piano in the music room, CB launches into a monologue about his dead dog and his recent fascination with the afterlife, causing Beethoven to fly into a rage that CB would dare turn to him after not talking to him for years. Beethoven tells CB about how he has been bullied and tormented for years because everyone thinks he is gay, but Beethoven does not know if he is gay because he has never had sex. CB admits that he did not know what to say to Beethoven after Beethoven's father was arrested, and though CB did not actually bully Beethoven, he apologizes for allowing it to happen. After being forgiven past grievances, CB kisses Beethoven. When Beethoven arrives at Marcy's party, Matt is outraged, insisting no homosexuals were invited. CB tells Matt to back off. Tricia trips and spills beer on Beethoven who throws his cup down and decides to leave, but CB grabs Matt when he lunges at Beethoven, telling him to calm down as he begs Beethoven to stay. When Matt asks if Beethoven's father is waiting for him, CB twists Matt's arm behind him back, demanding an apology. Marcy and Van tells CB to let Matt go because he is their friend, but CB insists that Beethoven is his friend also as he pushes Matt to the ground. Matt threatens to kill CB who stands next to Beethoven and tells his friends that they make him sick. After ascertaining that Beethoven is okay, CB grabs him and kisses him in front of everyone



before they flee. Matt is furious that Beethoven is messing with his best friend's head, threatening to make Beethoven pay.

After CB leaves Beethoven alone in the music room to consider whether he wants to be CB's boyfriend, Matt enters, unseen, until he greets Beethoven who tries to conceal his terror as Matt asks where his boyfriend is. Objecting that he had nothing to do with the other night, Beethoven begs Matt to leave him alone, but telling him to play something, Matt moves Beethoven's hands to the keys, and Beethoven plays "Moonlight Sonata." Matt asks if Beethoven and CB are a couple now and if they had sex, slamming Beethoven's head on the keys when he refuses to answer. When he asks "can't you people just keep it hidden" (page 43), Beethoven realizes Matt's secret, and when Matt threatens to kill Beethoven if he looks at CB again, Beethoven refuses, calling Matt Pig-Pen. Furious, Matt grabs Beethoven's mouth and slams the piano lid on Beethoven's hand several times as Beethoven screams into Matt's hand. Because Beethoven's hand is broken and he cannot play the piano any longer, he commits suicide. CB is furious and hurt that Beethoven left without saying goodbye, but when he finally receives a response from his pen pal, he learns about a girl who recently came to live near CB's pen pal told him about an incident in her school where a quiet, awkward boy was bullied and tormented until he opened fire in the cafeteria, taking many lives. No one ever offered him friendship, and the girl wishes she had not turned a blind eye, wondering how differently things might have turned out if he had had only one connection. CB's pen pal also tells him about a boy who recently moved in down the street who plays the piano like Beethoven, and he found and takes care of a dog who sings along. The boy often tells the pen pal of a person from where he used to live who meant more to him than anyone, and that person reminds the pen pal of CB. CB's pen pal wishes he had been able to meet CB because CB is a good man, and he tells him "maintain in your heart all that makes you who you are" (page 49).



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this play is third person. The point of view is limited and reliable which is shown by the fact that the characters' words and actions are shared with very limited access to their thoughts and feelings. This is important since *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* was written as a play and was meant to be performed. Occasional monologues throughout the play provide access to the characters' thoughts and emotions, but the only characters that perform monologues are CB and his sister.

This book consists primarily of dialogue and monologue since it is a play and meant to be performed. The minimal exposition that exists is presented as stage directions to the cast, providing instructions concerning the background, the music, lighting or the characters' expressions. This distribution is important since a play is intended to be seen, not read. The dialogue serves to aid the audience in following the story since it is nearly impossible to watch a play, especially this play where stage directions are minimalistic, without dialogue being performed. The viewpoint of the play focuses primarily on CB with some detours to show the viewpoint of CB's sister, Matt, Beethoven, Marcy, Tricia or Van; however, overall, the viewpoint is that of a limited, third-person narrator who sees a bit of everything.

## Setting

This play is set in the real world, apparently in a small, middle-class, suburban town where the characters have all known each other since childhood and homophobia runs rampant. The characters are teenagers whose high school is focused on the differences and similarities between them, bullying being common against those who are different than the majority, thus causing the characters to strive to be the same. The most obvious example of this is the fact that Beethoven is repeatedly tormented and bullied because he is viewed as a homosexual, even though the initial reason for this is because his father molested him.

The play occurs in the characters' hometown and at school. CB's dog is buried in his backyard. Marcy and Tricia plan Marcy's party during lunch in the cafeteria. Later, Marcy, Tricia, Matt and Van discuss CB kissing Beethoven at Marcy's party, and Matt swears vengeance against Beethoven. CB listens to Beethoven playing the piano in the music room during lunch. This is where he first kisses Beethoven and where he proposes that Beethoven is his boyfriend the Monday after Marcy's party. Matt visits Beethoven in the music room to threaten him, slamming Beethoven's fingers under the piano lid when Beethoven refuses to leave CB alone. Van's sister is locked up in the mental institution after burning the little red-headed girl's hair. CB visits and tells her about kissing Beethoven at Marcy's party and having sex afterward, and she is proud of



him for doing something different instead of being so predictable as usual. Marcy throws a party at her house while her parents are on vacation in Bali. This is where CB kisses Beethoven in front of everyone, throwing Matt into a rage. Marcy, Tricia, Van, CB and CB's sister gather in a classroom for a peer counseling session to discuss their feelings about Beethoven's suicide. CB is enraged at everyone's grief since they tormented Beethoven so much while he was alive, but he also claims that he wishes Beethoven were here so he could bully him, mocking Beethoven for yielding to the weakness of suicide. CS writes to CB from his home which is insinuated to be the afterlife as he describes it as a place where everyone treats each other with kindness, love and respect. He also tells CB about a boy who recently moved in down the street. He plays the piano like Beethoven, and he found and takes care of a dog who sings along. The boy often tells the pen pal of a person from where he used to live who meant more to him than anyone, and that person reminds the pen pal of CB.

## Language and Meaning

The language used in *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* is casual and informal with frequent vulgarity which aids in emphasizing the bullying culture due to the common use of derogatory insults and remarks. The style of the language is useful in showing the bullying that is prevalent in the play's high school as well as how it affects kids when they are picked on for being different. The language aids comprehension as it shows the derogatory comments, allowing the audience to empathize with the characters who are treated poorly by imagining how they would feel if treated in such a way.

The language characterizes the characters in the play as well as the effects of bullying. This book consists primarily of dialogue and monologue since it is a play and meant to be performed. The minimal exposition that exists is presented as stage directions to the cast, providing instructions concerning the background, the music, lighting or the characters' expressions. This distribution is important since a play is intended to be seen, not read. The dialogue serves to aid the audience in following the story since it is nearly impossible to watch a play, especially this play where stage directions are minimalistic, without dialogue being performed. Though the language is sometimes vague, it is useful in aiding the writing style by emphasizing the hurtful and deprecating tone that characters take when addressing someone who is different. Overall, it is fairly easy to understand, though the characters sometimes talk in riddles and lie to each other. This play seems to be an accurate portrayal of a typical high school and the accompanying friendships where everyone tries to fit in by being the same as everyone else instead of embracing their differences.

## Structure

*Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* is an unauthorized parody in which the write imagines the characters of the "Peanuts" comic strip as teenagers. The play consists of twenty-two scenes over forty-three pages. The scenes average around



two pages in length. The scenes are titled according to the events contained within them. They are generally very short and somewhat vague. Each scene occurs over a period of a few minutes, but larger periods of time are skipped in between scenes. The entire play occurs over the course of no more than a week.

*Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* by Bert V. Royal is a play about a teenage boy, CB, who begins to question the existence of an afterlife after his dog dies. Unable to find solace from his friends after his dog's death, CB turns to an artistic classmate, but their rekindled friendship pushes the bounds of what CB's friends are willing to accept, forcing CB to consider who he wants to be. *Dog Sees God* is a touching and thought-provoking play about being different in a school filled with people who all pretend to be the same. The play is slow-paced at first, but it becomes quicker paced toward the end. It is fairly easy to read, and the play is linear, though some references are made to the past. Overall, the play is thought-provoking and sad, but it is also inspiring since it promotes the idea of individualism by showing the depressing results of conformity and bullying people because of their differences.



## Quotes

"I hope you're still there. I'm not sure you ever were. I never got any letters back from you when I was a kid. But in a way it was always very therapeutic. Everyone else judges everything I say. And here you are: some anonymous person who never says 'boo.' Maybe you just read my letters and laughed or maybe you didn't read my letters or maybe you don't even exist. It was pretty frustrating when I was young, but now I'm glad that you won't respond. Just listen. That's what I want."

CB, Dear Pen Pal, page 7

"Oh, so you're Wiccan this week? Glad that's cleared up. I can't keep your personalities straight! Last week, you go with a friend to a Baptist church, come home and proceed to tell Mom, Dad and me that we're going to hell because we watch TV. A mere NINE DAYS LATER, you're Elvira, Mistress of the Dark. We can't keep up with you! FIND. AN. IDENTITY."

CB, Canis Exequiae, page 9

"Buddha believed that one of two things happens. Either you are reborn or you dissolve into nothingness. Oddly enough, the former is punishment and the latter, reward. We Buddhists believe that the corporeal body is the source of all suffering and a liberation from the body into nothingness, or nirvana, is the fuckin' way to go."

Van, Nirvana, page 10

"And it all started with that little faggot. I fuckin' hate that kid. He's always looking at me like he's in love with me. I fucking hate that kid."

Matt, Where Swine Live, page 13

"But, don't you think it's kind of weird? Having a funeral for a dog?"

Marcy, Spork, page 18

"I guess I was thinking, by burying him, that I'd have some closure or feel his presence there or something and I didn't and that just freaked me out, so I don't know. I mean, have you ever had someone close to you die and you can't stop thinking about them and what's happened to them? It's like you're stuck in this morbid place and there's so much death that you feel like your head is going to explode and it makes you think that you're not even there. That maybe you're dead, too."

CB, The Viper's Nest, page 21

"Yeah?! Well, you didn't stop it either! And the faculty doesn't care. You know what I'm so sick of hearing? 'They only pick on you because of their own insecurities.' The classic guidance counselor line! 'Oh geez, Mrs. Blank, since you put it that way, my head doesn't hurt so much anymore!' And what really kills me is that everybody wonders why kids bring guns to school and shoot you fuckers down. Maybe you're not the bully, but you stand idly by and watch. In my eyes that makes you even worse. So- Please. Just. Go."

Beethoven, The Viper's Nest, page 22





"You're cordially invited to the party of the year. My folks went to Bali and left my ass here. So what better way to get my revenge, than throwing a shindig that would make them both cringe? We'll have some kegs, so chip in some cash, Or else just bring from your parents' stash! I'm sure that someone will bring some grass, Remember the rule: puff, puff, pass! Anyone who plans on dropping E, will have to bring a pill for me. And anyone up for a little 'phys ed,' Well you can use my parents' bed! So, Mommy and Daddy I'm sure will regret, I'm throwing a party you'll never forget."  
Marcy, You're Invited!, pages 25-26

"Are you on crack? I'm not running away with you! I never want to see you again as long as I live! In fact, I think that I HATE YOU! What did you think that would accomplish?! Did you not stop to think about what it would mean for me?"  
Beethoven, Nocturne, page 28

"This is all that little faggot's fault. I don't know what he did to CB, but I'm gonna fucking kill him."  
Matt, The Hangover, page 30

"Those people out there are just as crazy as the ones in here."  
Van's Sister, Fire Is Bad, page 31

"Oh my God. I don't believe this... Because you did something different! You've always been so... predictable."  
Van's Sister, Fire Is Bad, page 32

"Just because I did something that I wanted to do doesn't make me a homo. I've smoked pot. Doesn't mean I'm a pothead. I've drank plenty of beer. Doesn't make me a drunk. You set that little redheaded girl's hair on fire. Doesn't make you a pyromaniac."  
CB, Fire Is Bad, page 33

"Hey, you know what would be the perfect revenge? If you had sex with your brother's best friend. Guys really hate that."  
Van, Our Sister of Mercy, page 37

"Oh my God. You guys are so blind! Matt's in love with CB. That's what this is all about. It doesn't take Nancy Drew to solve that case. I figured it out and I'm the stupid one."  
Tricia, Salisbury Steak, page 39

"Me and Beethoven would be revolutionaries! With our sporks raised, we would charge through this high school showing everyone how to be themselves and no one would have to apologize."  
CB, Warsaw War Song, page 40

"Don't worry. I've already started spreading the word that if they mess with my boyfriend, I'll be kicking some ass."  
CB, Mal Di Luna, page 41





"So, are you two, like, a couple now? Are you going to parade around the halls holding hands? Go to prom together? Did you have sex with him? Keep playing. Can't you people just keep it hidden? Instead of throwing it in our faces? CB is not like you. And if you so much as look at him again, I'll kill you. You got that, perv?"

Matt, *Mal Di Luna*, page 43

"Does it matter? Our good friend is dead! You're being really insensitive. I just wish that he had called me. I would've totally, like, told him everything would be okay and stuff. I don't think he had my number, though."

Marcy, *Peer Counseling*, page 44

"That's life, Patty. The world is full of people who have tough lives. But do you seem them killing themselves? No. So, he couldn't play the piano anymore. There are people out there who can't walk. Can't see. Do they give up? No. They keep going. 'Pathetic bullshit,' sis. Suicide is pathetic bullshit. It's weak."

CB, *Peer Counseling*, pages 44-45

"Look, I went through... something. Some sort of phase. I don't know what it was, but I'm done with it now. Everything's okay. I'm back to normal. This is a good thing."

CB, *Brothers and Sisters*, page 46

"Do you ever feel like you're not a real person? That you're the product of someone's imagination and you can't think for yourself because you're really like just some 'creation' and that somewhere there's people laughing every time you fail?... Cry and they laugh even harder."

CB, *Brothers and Sister*, pages 46-47

"As for the questions that you are asking yourself and others: Don't concern yourself with death. Immerse yourself in life. Enjoy every moment that you're allowed to but keep asking questions. My dear friend. Don't ever stop asking questions."

Van reading letter from C. S., *Dear CB*, page 48

"I apologize for not being there for you before. And I'm not sure that I'll be able to write you again. Just know that there's someone out there thinking about you. Someone who has a vested interest in your success. How I wish I had had the opportunity to meet you. Maintain in your heart all that makes you who you are. You are a good man."

CB reading letter from C. S., *Dear CB*, pages 48-49



## Topics for Discussion

Why does CB suddenly become interested in death and the afterlife?

How does CB change throughout this play?

Compare and contrast CB, Matt and Beethoven.

Why is Beethoven bullied, and how does CB make this worse?

What is Matt's big secret, and how is this revealed?

Who is CB's pen pal, and what is implied about him when he finally responds?

What message does this play teach about being different and bullying?