

The Dead Zone Study Guide

The Dead Zone by Stephen King

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Plot Summary

"The Dead Zone" by Stephen King is the story of Johnny Smith. Johnny starts out as a happy child who enjoys playing in the wintry outdoors in Maine. At six years old, Johnny's only concern as well as his only dream is to learn how to ice skate backwards. Many of the neighborhood children are playing on the local pond, skating and playing hockey. The kids are separated by age. The older kids play hockey on one side of the pond and skaters stay to the other side. There is an accident and Johnny is knocked to the ground, hitting his head so hard that he blacks out. After a few minutes, Johnny seems to be relatively okay except for a knot on his head. The only peculiar thing is that Johnny tells one of the chaperons "not to jump it no more" and something about a battery and an explosion. Everyone thinks the comment is confusion from the bump on the head. A few days later, the neighbor jumps his old truck once again and there is an explosion, shooting battery acid into the man's face. No one recalls Johnny's prediction.

After college, Johnny takes a teaching job at a local high school where he meets Sarah Bracknell. Johnny and Sarah begin to date and fall in love. On Halloween, Johnny and Sarah go to a local carnival. The date is almost ruined when Johnny tries to scare Sarah with a scary mask. At the carnival, Johnny tries his hand at the Wheel of Fortune. Johnny cannot lose and wins over 500 dollars. While Johnny plays the game, Sarah notices something strange about him and is scared.

Sarah eats a bad hot dog and becomes violently ill. The bad food causes the pair to cancel their first night together. Sarah convinces Johnny that she will be fine and so Johnny hails a cab and heads back to his apartment. Along the way, there is a terrible accident. The cab driver dies and Johnny goes into a coma that lasts four and a half years.

While Johnny is in the coma, his mother becomes a religious fanatic and Sarah moves on with her life, marrying and having a child.

Much to everyone's amazement, Johnny comes out of the coma. Almost immediately, it is apparent that Johnny has received some sort of psychic gift - or curse - depending on who is being asked. The first real incidents take place in the hospital, first with Dr. Weizak and then one of the nurses. The story gets out when Johnny "reads" a reporter. Johnny has become a circus sideshow.

Over the next couple of years, Johnny tries to deal with the after effects of the near-fatal accident. The psychic is forced to leave his home town and takes a job in New Hampshire where he tutors a teenage boy. Along the way, there are more predictions. The biggest case arrives in the form of Greg Stillson, a politician with a murderous past. Stillson is almost messianic in his appeal to the people, but Johnny knows the truth and sees a future in which Stillson will be responsible for nuclear war and genocide. Johnny must kill Stillson.

In the end, Johnny learns that he has a brain tumor and refuses treatment. The only things left to do are to write letters to his father, Sarah and Dr. Weizak. Johnny plans the assassination and although he fails to kill Stillson, the politician's career is ruined and the world saved.



Prologue, Part 1: Chapters 1-4

Prologue, Part 1: Chapters 1-4 Summary

The prologue begins in January 1953. Johnny Smith is six years old and happy to be alive on such a frosty day. Although the temperature is 20° neighborhood children all flock to Runaround Pond to skate and play hockey. Johnny's only wish at this point in life is to learn how to ice skate backwards. On the ice there is an accident where one of the larger kids collides with Johnny. Johnny is knocked out after he hits his head on the ice. After Johnny comes to, however, he rambles incoherently about an accident that has not yet occurred. The prediction is not noted by those around Johnny. When it comes true, no one realizes that Johnny had predicted it. After a few minutes, Johnny seems to be fine in the incident is all but forgotten.

It is the summer of 1955. Greg Stillson travels throughout the Midwest selling Bibles for the American TruthWay Bible Company. At 22 years old, Stillson is already an entrepreneur and makes more money selling his own paperbacks rather than the Bibles he is being paid to sell. Stillson stops at a farmhouse in Iowa, searching for his next mark. No one is home at the farmhouse, and Stillson is greeted by a large mean dog. Stillson runs back to his car and locks himself in to avoid being attacked. Instead of driving away, Stillson decides to shoot at the dog with a Flit gun loaded with ammonia. Stillson shoots the dog in the face with the ammonia, and when the dog is down starts to kick it. The dog retaliates and attempts to attack Stillson. Stillson kills the dog.

Part One, The Wheel of Fortune, begins with Sarah Bracknell going to Johnny Smith's apartment for a date on Halloween. The pair had made plans to go to a nearby carnival. Johnny nearly ruins the evening by attempting to scare Sarah with a Halloween mask, but the pair makes up and goes to the fair 20 miles away. Sarah compares Johnny to her old boyfriend who turned out to be a violent man. Johnny is a welcome change.

Johnny and Sarah go to the Carnival, eat hot dogs, and play games. Just as they are preparing to leave a carnival barker gets Johnny's attention and convinces him to spin the Wheel of Fortune. Johnny has an amazing streak of luck, which turns out to be a psychic incident. At the end of the evening Johnny wins more than \$500, much to the chagrin of the barker.

Sarah decides to finally sleep with Johnny and they profess their love for the first time. Just as Sarah and Johnny are getting ready to leave the carnival, Sarah becomes violently ill from eating a hot dog. The evening is ruined, and although Johnny offers to stay at Sarah's apartment to keep an eye on her, Sarah insists she will be fine. Johnny calls a cab to go home. On the way back to Johnny's apartment, the cab is involved in a head-on collision. The cab driver dies and Johnny goes into a coma.

Chapter three begins with Herb and Vera Smith receiving a phone call from the police, informing them that Johnny has been in a serious car accident. Herb Smith tries to



make sense of the whole incident while Vera becomes completely hysterical and falls into a religious frenzy.

Sarah learns of the accident and goes to Eastern Maine Medical, the hospital where Johnny is taken. At the hospital Sarah meets Johnny's parents and together they wait for news about Johnny's condition and prognosis. Finally the doctor talks to Sarah and the Smiths. The doctor says that Johnny has gone into a coma and his chances for survival are not good. It is a waiting game. Vera is hysterical and professes repeatedly that Johnny will live because God has a divine plan.

Chapter four introduces a serial killer that targets children at the playground beside the Castle Rock Elementary School. The killer was severely abused by his mother, who once caught him playing with himself. The boy was scarred by the incident, as well as the repercussions for his actions. In this chapter, the man attacks a girl from a local coffee shop and kills her. The killer convinces himself that the sheriff will blame the crime on a drifter.

Prologue, Part 1: Chapters 1-4 Analysis

The story starts off showing Johnny Smith as an average little boy who delights in skating and being with his friends. Johnny has a quick wit and easy smile, and nearly forgets about his injury immediately after it happens.

Greg Stillson is a mean-spirited young man who intends to destroy anything that stands in his path, even a somewhat defenseless animal. It is clear from the beginning that Stillson will only become more cruel and ruthless as he ages and gains power and authority.

Sarah is more conservative than Johnny and must make some adjustments to Johnny's silly nature and laid-back ways. The incident with the mask scares Sarah, who believes it was inconsiderate. Although Sarah is angry, she finds it hard to stay mad at Johnny. Professing love for Johnny is hard for Sarah but she knows that it is time.

Sarah is also frightened by Johnny when he plays the Wheel of Fortune. There is a glassy look in Johnny's eyes, as if he is somewhere else.

It seems like a cruel twist of fate for Johnny to be involved in the car accident just when he and Sarah are about to consummate their relationship. The couple is in love. The events of that night will haunt Sarah, and eventually, Johnny.

The killer in Castle Rock seems to have nothing to do with the story at this point. The man is obviously twisted, scarred by his mother's punishments. Because the man feels as if he is immune to getting caught, it leads the reader to believe that the man has a presence in the community.



Part 1: Chapters 5-9

Part 1: Chapters 5-9 Summary

Herb and Vera Smith finally return home to Pownal. As Sarah had predicted, the hospital bills quickly eat through their savings to the point where Herb has to apply for emergency disaster assistance. Taking charity, as Herb sees it, ages the man more than Johnny's accident. Vera falls deeper into a religious frenzy, becoming an extreme zealot. The woman becomes involved with all kinds of cultish figures and outrageous beliefs and activities. Through it all, Vera insists that one of the groups will help to cure Johnny and that these pen pals are her only link to hope for Johnny's recovery. Herb must intervene and stop Vera from spending what little money they have left on potions and amulets.

Sarah attempts to put her life back together. Herb stays in close contact with Sarah and confides that Vera is slipping away into her own world. The situation is very difficult for Herb, and Sarah is not at all sure where she fits in.

It is the summer of 1971. Greg Stillson has become a successful businessman, operating an insurance and real estate company. Sonny Elliman is introduced as Stillson's flunkie and enforcer. Elliman has no inclination to work for Stillson at first, but Stillson blackmails Elliman into "an opportunity." Although Stillson claims that he doesn't want anything at present, he may need something in the future.

Sarah manages to move on with her life and eventually meets a law student named Walter Hazlett. Sarah and Walt begin to date and eventually marry. Herb Smith comes to the wedding but Vera does not since she is in Vermont waiting for a spaceship to take her to heaven. Vera eventually returns and for the first time, Herb wishes Johnny would die to end all the pain.

On Halloween night 1974, Sarah and Walt Hazlett have a baby boy. During the labor, Sara realizes that she is in the same hospital as Johnny.

Two young boys are playing outside in the December snow when they discover the body of the fourth victim of the Castle Rock Strangler. It has been four years since the first victim was found. The killings had stopped, or so the townspeople thought.

Chapter six details the awakening of John Smith. Johnny begins to stir but sleep overtakes Johnny again and it is six months later, in May 1975, when Johnny awakes. Everything feels different and Johnny has no idea that he has been unconscious for four and a half years. Johnny shocks the nurse when he speaks to her for the first time. The doctors are also in shock, having believed that Johnny would never recover.

Herb and Vera Smith are stunned and elated at the news. Vera is on the edge of insanity with God's prophecy for Johnny.



There are many tests and examinations for Johnny over the next weeks. The day after Johnny wakes up, Herb and Vera go to visit. Johnny learns that Sarah is married and Johnny is heartbroken. Herb and Vera fill Johnny in on the local happenings since he was last conscious. Politics are also discussed as Johnny and Herb are very political.

Chapter seven begins with Dr. Weizak performing tests on Johnny to test his mental stability and to determine what kind of damage was done by the accident and ensuing coma. The test results are better than expected. This is the first time Johnny experiences a "dead zone" when he cannot recall certain ordinary items. Dr. Weizak says that it is normal to have some damage.

Johnny has visions of Dr. Weizak as a boy as well as of the doctor's mother. The family lived in Poland in 1939 during the Nazi invasion. Dr. Weizak believes that his mother is dead. Johnny tells Weizak that his mother is alive and gives him information on how to find her, including the fact that the woman suffered from permanent amnesia and does not know that her son is still alive or even that he existed outside her dreams. Dr. Weizak does not believe what he hears and becomes very upset.

Johnny learns that he has lost control of his body and falls into a deep depression.

Chapter eight details Johnny's visit with Herb and Vera who came to stay for a week to be with their son. Politics are discussed, including the resignation of Nixon and Agnew, as well as the fates of several other high level politicians.

Dr. Weizak has a long talk with Johnny about Weizak's mother. Johnny does not need validation that Weizak's mother is alive as he already knows that it is true. There is also another incident when Johnny tells his favorite nurse that her son will be fine after an eye operation. Naturally, Johnny was right about that, too.

Dr. Weizak tells Johnny that he will not disturb his mother and instead, let her have peace in her life. Dr. Weizak tells Johnny that perhaps some things are better left alone.

Chapter nine begins with Johnny's first surgery. Although Johnny's body has been worked by physical therapists, his ligaments have atrophied and the surgery is necessary to lengthen them so he can walk again.

Ten days after Johnny's first surgery, Sarah comes to visit. It is traumatic for both parties. The couple discusses where they are now in their lives and lament what could have been. Sarah knows that Johnny still loves her and Sarah also has feelings for Johnny but must acknowledge that she is happily married with a young son. Before Sarah leaves, Johnny has a vision. Johnny tells Sarah that she did not lose her wedding ring like she thought and tells her where to find it.

Part 1: Chapters 5-9 Analysis

Greg Stillson's plans seem to be progressing just as the man had hoped. Arranging the use of Sonny Elliman's help is part of Stillson's plan to keep people out of his way as he



attempts to conquer the political scene. Stillson is a patient man and knows he must bide his time.

Sarah has an extremely difficult time moving on with her life and lives for a while as a celibate woman who has no interest in any one or thing. Sarah is reluctantly attracted to Walt Hazlett and even then, she suspects it is because Walt reminds her of Johnny. The pair eventually fall in love and marry.

Herb tries to hang on throughout Vera's period of crazy behaviors but the fanaticism and Johnny's condition take a heavy toll on the man.

The four and a half years when Johnny is in a coma covers a lot of territory, both in fiction as well as the politics of the time. While the story of Johnny Smith is fictional, King uses a great deal of material in regards to the resignation of Richard Nixon as well as the fates of Agnew, Muskie, and McGovern.

The doctors at Eastern Main Med never thought Johnny would come out of the coma, and they certainly did not expect him to recover as well as he did. The tests performed by the neurologists did not uncover much in the way of damage and it is admitted that there is much about the brain that is a mystery.

The road to recovery is a long and hard one for Johnny, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. There is a great deal of physical pain, depression, and difficulty in adapting to the changes that have happened while he was in a coma. Dealing with the loss of Sarah seems to be the hardest thing, above and beyond Vera's condition and all the medical issues.

Dr. Weizak becomes a close friend as well as Johnny's doctor. The incident with Weizak's mother disturbs and upsets the doctor, yet Weizak does not try to brush it under the rug. Word is getting out about Johnny's abilities and Weizak warns Johnny that the gossip may cause problems for him down the road.



Part 1: Chapters 10-14

Part 1: Chapters 10-14 Summary

Chapter ten begins with Vera and Herb. Vera has to go on medication for high blood pressure. The woman claims that the medicine does nothing but make her feel sick and despite Herb and Johnny's cajoling, Vera stops taking the meds. Herb tries everything he knows to convince his wife to take the medication, to no avail. Vera's correspondents agree with her that God will take care of everything.

Johnny and Vera finally begin to argue about God's will regarding the new prophetic gifts. Herb plays peace maker. When Marie tells Johnny that her son is okay since he had the eye operation, Johnny thinks that perhaps God did have something to do with the gift.

Dave Jensen from Cleaves Mills High School comes to visit Johnny. Dave has not changed much in the last five years. The pair chats and Dave offers Johnny a teaching job, if he feels up to it. The position will be open in October as the current teacher is going on maternity leave. Johnny promises to consider it.

One week before Johnny is to be released from the hospital, David Bright's article appears in the local newspaper. Johnny likes Bright but holds him off, as Bright seems more concerned about making money than any type of publicity.

Just before Johnny is released, he warns a physical therapist that her house is on fire. The woman thinks Johnny is crazy but eventually relents after Johnny gives details about the kitchen and the woman's cats. Johnny calls the fire department and the therapist rushes home. Johnny was right and because of the vision, the woman's home and pets suffered little to no damage.

In chapter eleven, Johnny is faced with his first press conference. Dr. Weizak is concerned about Johnny's health as well as the publicity. If Johnny could avoid it, he would. The pair makes a plan and Johnny addresses the crowd. There are national reporters there as well as local one which bothers Johnny. Johnny is asked about his visions, particularly the latest one with Eileen McGowan's house being on fire. The members of the press are relentless with questions and for a while, Weizak manages to keep them in check. Both men attempt to explain the unexplainable condition Johnny has been in since he woke up. One reporter becomes obnoxious and insulting, accusing Johnny of being a fraud. Johnny and Weizak are prepared to walk away, but the reporter refuses to let it go until Johnny gives a demonstration. Against Weizak's judgment as well as his own, Johnny relents and takes the man's St. Christopher medal. Johnny reads the man's medal and relays intimate details of how the medal belonged to the reporter's older sister who died from an overdose. The description was clear and accurate. The reporter screams at Johnny and hits him before fainting.



Not long after the televised report showing Johnny's interaction with the reporter, Herb calls the hospital. Vera has had a stroke and is not expected to live. Johnny insists on going to be with his family. Weizak objects, knowing that it will not do any good. Instead, Weizak takes Johnny to the hospital where his mother lies in bed, perhaps dying. It is the first time in five years Johnny has been outside the hospital.

Chapter twelve details Johnny's visit to the hospital to see Vera. Herb is falling apart and it seems to Johnny that his father is smaller now, as if shrunken by all the tragedy. Johnny spends time with Vera and tries to pay attention while she imparts religious "wisdom" to her son. Vera still insists that Johnny is on a mission from God. This is the last time Johnny sees Vera alive.

Chapter thirteen returns to Greg Stillson. Stillson is now a powerful figure in his town and has been given the task of speaking to the nephew of a prominent member of the town council. The boy had upset the apple cart by wearing an obscene shirt on the street and Greg, being so good with kids as well as being an upstanding member of the community, was asked to speak to the rebellious boy. The boy is a piece of trash in Stillson's mind. The kid has no idea how dangerous Stillson is or what he is up against. Stillson makes his point through words and violence until the kid gets the point and is scared enough not to make the same mistake twice.

Sarah is feeding Denny when Walt tells her about an article in the newspaper regarding Johnny's press conference. The pair gets into an argument over Johnny's credibility. Sarah is extremely sensitive about Johnny and Walt backs down, meaning no harm. Sarah is extremely upset and calls the hospital only to learn that Johnny had discharged himself the previous evening.

Chapter fourteen begins with Johnny back at the Smith home in Pownal. One of Johnny's daily exercises is walking the quarter mile to the mailbox and back. Johnny was slowly regaining some strength. The mail pours in by the truckload. People send cards and letters along with gifts and objects they wanted Johnny to touch and read. On this particular day, the only mail Johnny wants to read is a note from Dr. Weizak and a card from Sarah expressing her condolences about Vera's death. Sarah tells Johnny that she will be nearby and asks if she can see him.

A staff member from Inside View, a tabloid-style newspaper, comes to the Smith house to offer Johnny a job. Johnny refuses before he even hears the offer. Johnny is not a practicing psychic nor does he want to be. The last thing Johnny wants is publicity. The man says that there are staff writers to write the columns; they just want Johnny's name. Johnny listens to the man, sickened by the deception. Johnny physically throws the man off the porch and the scene ends badly with the man finally leaving the property.

Back in Ridgeway, New Hampshire, Greg Stillson informs his banker that he intends to run for a seat in the House of Representatives. The banker is shocked. Stillson announces that the banker will become his campaign manager and will be required to raise a large sum of money in order to fund the campaign. The banker objects until



Stillson blackmails the man with photos of him engaging in sex with a woman who is not his wife. The banker agrees to take the job.

Part 1: Chapters 10-14 Analysis

Vera's health is declining and the woman's fanatic religious views allow her to believe that she does not need medication; that God will provide and save her if it is meant to happen that way. Herb continues to come closer and closer to his wits' end when it comes to Vera but is powerless to change the situation. Vera continues to try and convince Johnny of his destiny, which angers Johnny and upsets the entire family.

Johnny has his first real confrontation with the press. Johnny jokes to Dr. Weizak that it must be a slow news day if all the reporters have nothing better to do than to interview him. Johnny has no idea that his story is nationwide and has captured the attention of many. Dr. Weizak tries hard to protect Johnny from the press and also attempts to explain the brain damage sustained in the accident as well as during the long period in which Johnny was in a coma. Weizak manages to keep the press conference reasonably under control. One reporter will not give up and continues to be aggressive and insulting until Johnny finally takes the man's St. Christopher medal. The reporter is shocked at the information Johnny delivers and it is clearly a painful experience. The press conference ends badly. Although Johnny is hit, he feels worse about how he handled the reporter.

Johnny blames himself for Vera's stroke since it occurred right after the press conference. The doctors tell Johnny that it is not his fault. Still, Johnny feels guilty about the incident. Vera's death causes a flood of emotions in Herb and Johnny from guilt to relief.

Greg Stillson has managed to become mayor in Ridgeway and continues to do great community service on the surface while controlling the town in more discreet and unsavory ways. People are learning quickly that Stillson is not a man to be tampered with and that the man has a violent temper and a crazy streak that means he will stop at nothing to get what he wants.



Part 1: Chapters 15-16

Part 1: Chapters 15-16 Summary

Johnny is upset by the visit from the reporter. In a moment of weakness, Johnny calls Sarah and arranges to meet with her the next day. Sarah comes to the Smith house, her little boy in tow. Johnny and Sarah have a nice long chat while the baby plays in the yard. Eventually, Sarah says that she still loves Johnny and it was because of him that Sarah was able to fall in love with a good man like Walt. Although it could only be one time, both feel that it is right to take back that night they had planned to spend together. While the baby sleeps, Johnny and Sarah make love for the first and last time.

Sarah and the baby stay for dinner and Herb is delighted to see them. Everyone has a nice time and before Sarah leaves, it is decided that she and Johnny will not keep in touch because it would be too easy to be together. Although both are sad, that one afternoon will have to be enough.

Chapter sixteen details the Inside View reporter's revenge on Johnny for bodily throwing him out shortly before. The reporter wrote a story about Johnny, falsely quoting him as a fake who only wanted attention and money. The reporter's intention was to discredit Johnny, but Johnny did not care about it since he had no intention of ever exploiting his gift. The arrival of cards and letters slowed and the gifts almost completely stopped coming, for which Johnny was relieved. The letters asking for hope were now focused on the "hoax" and many were angry or even borderline threatening. Herb did not take it as well as Johnny. Johnny said that perhaps this would enable him to go back to as normal a life as possible.

Just when Johnny thought he was clear of people bothering him about the ability to see into the future, he gets a call from the sheriff in Castle Rock. Sam Weizak had given the sheriff Johnny's new unlisted phone number because the police needed help solving the Castle Rock strangler case. Johnny is furious and all but hangs up on the sheriff. As Johnny decorates for Christmas, he keeps hearing Vera say that he shouldn't run away from the gift, that God has a job for him to do. Although Johnny reads the papers, he somehow missed the latest story on the strangler. Johnny finds the paper and reads about the latest victim. As much as Johnny's conscience is bothering him, self-pity takes over and Johnny decides that the killing is not his problem.

Johnny calls Dr. Weizak and the doctor apologizes about giving out Johnny's phone number. Johnny says he only wants a normal life and everything will be fine when he goes back to school. Weizak believes that Johnny can help the sheriff but has to let it go. That night, Herb comes home for dinner and tells Johnny about the newest victim - a nine year old girl. Johnny's headache worsens and he calls the sheriff to see how he can help.



Johnny drives to a diner where he meets Sheriff Bannerman from Castle Rock. It is apparent that the sheriff is worn out by following leads that never amount to anything. When Johnny shakes the man's hand, he gets images about the family dog and some other minor details. To prove that his gift is real, Johnny tells the sheriff, who is flabbergasted. The sheriff asks questions and for the first time, someone realizes what a toll it takes on Johnny to experience visions.

Johnny gets all the details of the case thus far and accompanies the sheriff to his office. At the office, Johnny avoids reporters and also meets some of the other officers. Although the snow is deep, Johnny asks to go to the crime scene. Once there, Johnny picks up images from all the people who have walked or sat on that particular area of the bandstand. The images from the killer are vivid and shocking. The man always wears a black raincoat and is too close to the investigation to ever get caught or so he thinks. Johnny sees it all, from the abuse as a child to the rapes and murders.

Back at the sheriff's office, Johnny reveals the name of the killer to the sheriff. It is Deputy Frank Dodd. The sheriff goes crazy, saying that it is not possible and even hits Johnny. There are heated words and Johnny reminds the sheriff who asked for help. The sheriff and Johnny check Dodd's time cards and show that he was off duty during every murder. When there was a lull in the murders, Dodd was out of town at a seminar that lasted for two months. A call to that location reveals an unsolved murder of a girl who was killed in the same way as the Castle Rock victims. The sheriff is in shock.

Johnny and the sheriff sneak out of the police department and go to the Dodd house where Frank lives with his mother. The woman is overly protective of her son and does not want Bannerman to wake him. The sheriff insists and goes to Frank's room. It is a child's room, complete with cowboys and a child's bed. The sheriff can now fully believe Johnny's vision. Frank Dodd is found dead in the bathroom with a note containing a confession. Johnny blacks out.

A news story detailing Johnny's involvement in the Castle Rock strangler case hits the papers and once again Johnny is thrust into the limelight.

Johnny and Sarah write letters to each other. Sarah expresses concern, and Johnny tries to assure her that everything is fine. Johnny also receives a letter from Dave Pelsen, letting him know that the school board has rescinded the offer of a teaching position because of the publicity. Dave is furious but had no choice. Johnny is devastated and does not know what he will do with the rest of his life. Johnny admits to himself that his mother was right about not running from responsibility but that the Castle Rock case was the last straw.

Part 1: Chapters 15-16 Analysis

The incident with the Inside View reporter only strengthens Johnny's resolve to get away from any life involving psychic ability.



Seeing Sarah could have been a huge mistake but Johnny feels good about it and it is so easy for them to be together. Johnny adores Denny, as does Herb. It is clear that Sarah and Johnny still love each other very much but Sarah has a commitment to uphold and must be fair to her husband and child. Although it is not enough, it is decided that they cannot be together again, no matter how much either or both of them wants it.

Johnny is biding his time until he can go back to teaching after the holidays. The call from Sheriff Bannerman interrupts Johnny's day and brings surprise and anger. Johnny is shocked that Sam Weizak would give out the Smiths' new unlisted phone number. Although Johnny sympathizes with the sheriff, he is too angry to see past his own self-pity. Johnny all but hangs up on the sheriff and makes it clear that he wants no part of the investigation.

Once again, Johnny is plagued by a terrible headache. Johnny reads the most recent in-depth story on the strangler case and is still trying to convince himself that the murders are not his problem and that the visions will not be able to help. After all, the psychic abilities are not a parlor trick that can be accessed on demand.

The news about the little girl hits Johnny hard and he agrees to meet with the sheriff. Johnny likes the sheriff and the new turn in the case compels him to help. The sheriff gets more than he bargained for when Johnny reveals the killer's identity. The sheriff is angry, hurt and scared that Dodd could be the killer. The suicide and confession validate Johnny's vision and the case is solved.

Although Sarah and Johnny have not spoken in almost three years, her letter is welcome. The letter that is not welcome is the one from Dave Pelsen regarding the teaching job. Pelsen tells Johnny that he threatened to resign but it did no good. Johnny is filled with self-pity and says that no one understands that this "gift" is killing him.



Part 2: Chapters 17-20

Part 2: Chapters 17-20 Summary

Part Two, The Laughing Tiger, chapter seventeen, begins with Johnny teaching Chuck Chatsworth how to read. Chuck is a bright kid with a passion for sports who also has a reading phobia. Chuck is a seventeen-year-old student who is funny and charming and also afraid of displeasing his successful father. Chuck is under a great deal of pressure to apply to colleges but his lack of reading ability means that Chuck cannot successfully take the required SATs.

The job with the Chatsworths is perfect for Johnny since it meant moving to New Hampshire. Johnny is anonymous in New Hampshire. In addition to teaching Chuck, Johnny takes a job in a local diner.

Chuck's reading greatly improves but the boy has little to no retention on the material he just read. The father suspects several different problems, but Johnny claims it is a simple reading phobia. To prove his point to Chuck, the Chatsworths and himself, Johnny throws rapid fire questions at Chuck and the boy is astonished to realize that he remembers everything he just read. It was a mental block. Chuck is thrilled and Johnny explains that the boy is simply overthrowing - trying too hard to please his father even though Roger Chatsworth is nothing but supportive.

In chapter eighteen, Sonny Elliman is waiting in the back seat of Warren Richardson's car. Richardson had been an unidentified source in a series of fraudulent real estate deals that named Greg Stillson as one of the crooked participants which also involved kickbacks and payoffs. Elliman convinces Richardson that he should not have talked and that it is unfair to make certain people look bad, especially if that person is running for public office. Elliman threatens Richardson and his family. As much as Richardson wants to put a stop to Stillson's campaign, the man has too much to lose. Someone else will surely step in.

Chapter nineteen returns to the subject of politics. The presidential campaign is heating up and Johnny makes it a point to be informed. In New Hampshire there are many opportunities to meet candidates. Johnny meets Jimmy Carter and scares the man when he says that Carter will be president. Another powerful man has also entered the scene, a former actor by the name of Ronald Reagan.

Johnny has a hard time looking in the mirror and seeing how much he has aged recently. Back in Pownal, Herb tells Johnny about a local widow he has been helping with household repairs. Johnny suspects that Herb is interested in the woman but Herb denies it.

Roger Chatsworth goes to see Johnny to thank him for the hard work he's been putting in with Chuck. Roger says the improvement is almost eerie. Johnny suggests prep



school, postponing college for one year and explains Chuck's fears about measuring up to his father. Everyone knows that Roger would never intentionally make Chuck feel bad or inferior but Roger has big shoes to fill. As a bonus for Chuck's improvement, Roger gives Johnny a \$500 cashier's check. Roger also reveals that he knows all about Johnny and does not care.

While Johnny and Roger are talking, the newest candidate is shown on the television. Gregory Stillson, a forty-three year old former salesman for the TruthWay Bible Company and ex-rainmaker, has captivated audiences all over the state. The man's demeanor and actions are outrageous and the crowd loves him for it. Stillson is obviously a go-getter who is against pollution, corruption, and anything else that will secure votes. Roger tells Johnny that the man is crazy. While Roger means it in a zany kind of way, no one has yet discovered that Stillson really is insane.

Chapter twenty details Johnny's first real introduction to the world of Greg Stillson. With the Chatsworths away, Johnny and the family's gardener discuss politics. The gardener, who is studying for his citizenship test, plans to go with a class to see Stillson speak at a rally. Although it is also Johnny's free weekend, he plans to go into Boston to see a movie. Yet, there is something about Stillson that reminds Johnny of Frank Dodd and the thought is quite disturbing.

Johnny was given use of the Chatsworths' Mercedes and head for Boston. The Stillson thing still bothers him but Johnny tries to ignore it. Somewhere along the way, Johnny heads toward the rally almost without realizing it.

The rally is packed and Johnny waits for hours for it to begin. Johnny has a bad feeling about it and thinks that he should leave but does not. Shortly before Stillson is set to come on, the man's body guards come on the scene. The body guards are no more than a dressed up motorcycle gang, something that should throw up red flags as they work for a future member of the House of Representatives. No one seems to notice.

Stillson greets the crowd and almost against his will, Johnny shakes hands with the man. Instantly, Johnny knows all there is to know about Stillson and it is terrifying. Stillson knows something is wrong and there is terror in his eyes. For Johnny, the feelings and images have never been so strong. However, this time everything seems to be covered by a blue filter, one that makes some things softer and mercifully blocks out others, but Johnny has already seen it all. The most terrifying image is that of Stillson being inaugurated into the White House several years hence. There were more images, some of them not as clear but still frightening. The bodyguards go after Johnny and Johnny is knocked unconscious.

Part 2: Chapters 17-20 Analysis

The breakthrough with Chuck is thrilling for all involved. Chuck finally begins to feel hope about his future and looks forward to improving with Johnny's help. Johnny is also thrilled yet cautiously optimistic. Johnny hopes he can convince Roger to send Chuck to



a prep school to ease some of the pressure and allow the boy to advance at his own pace.

Johnny is surprised that Roger knows about the accident, coma and resulting injuries and abilities. Roger does not seem to care about any of it, only that Johnny is a good teacher. Johnny has proven that he is able to help Chuck.

Politics are a large part of Johnny's life as well as other people close to him such as his father and Sarah. Ngo, the Chatsworths' gardener, is learning a lot about politics and how everything works since he is studying to become a citizen and is required to know about the political process.

Stillson's popularity baffles Johnny and Roger. The man is amusing in a drunken uncle sort of way and his charisma has obviously carried him to the point of being a shoe-in for the House. Johnny cannot figure out why Stillson bothers him so much.

The decision to go to the Stillson rally is almost unconscious. Part of Johnny's brain tells him not to go, but he seems almost powerless to obey. For some unknown reason, Johnny must go to the rally. Johnny has no inclination or desire to shake Stillson's hand but finds himself doing so. Stillson, much like most other people, has a sense of dread when Johnny touches him. Johnny is immediately hit with a tidal wave of information and knows all of Stillson's secrets, from the murders to the crooked deals. It is then that Johnny realizes he must do something to stop Stillson. Being knocked unconscious is a relief to Johnny.



Part 2: Chapters 21-24

Part 2: Chapters 21-24 Summary

In chapter 21, Johnny meets with the FBI and the local police chief. The men question Johnny about his presence at the rally and the activities that took place. Johnny knows something is wrong since it is unlikely blacking out at a rally is a cause for being questioned by the police. The police chief and the FBI agents think Johnny knows something about Stillson but Johnny says nothing. The agents tell Johnny that they have been watching Stillson, that they know something is dirty about the man. Plus, Johnny is not the only one who has suffered injuries at one of the rallies. Something seems to happen to people who get in Greg Stillson's way.

Johnny and Ngo discuss the rally. Ngo compares Stillson to a laughing tiger. According to Ngo, a laughing tiger seems harmless enough on the outside, but deep down, it is still a tiger - a vicious animal that can and will kill. Stillson is compared to a laughing tiger by Johnny as well. Ngo says that laughing tigers must be killed, as was the one in his village when he was a boy. When Johnny questions murder, Ngo says that in Stillson's case, the murder relates to his political career and is not literal.

Johnny studies Stillson and learns all there is to know about the man. It is no surprise when Stillson wins the seat in the House. Johnny shares his political views with Herb although he does not reveal all about Stillson. Herb is preoccupied with his own life these days - he has proposed to the widow Charlene. Johnny is happy for his father.

Johnny becomes borderline obsessive with collecting stories and news on Stillson. Johnny tries to convince himself that it's nothing like the cases in which people stalk and try to harm political figures. Johnny has a cause.

As time goes on, Johnny has violent nightmares in which he can see Stillson's plan for starting a nuclear war. More stories begin to come out about Stillson's less-than-ethical activities. Johnny cannot seem to stop thinking about killing the laughing tiger.

Chapter twenty-two begins with Herb's wedding to Charlene Mackenzie. Johnny is truly happy for his father. It is difficult for Johnny to see Sarah, who is pregnant with her second child. Johnny has a conversation with Charlene's father who served in World War I and was a decorated soldier. Charlene's brother served in World War II and was killed. Johnny tells the old man that he is writing an essay and wants to know if the man had a chance, would he have killed Hitler? The man said he would without even thinking twice.

Johnny poses the same question to Roger and Chuck. Both men also said they would kill Hitler. Meanwhile Johnny is growing thin and looks unwell. Ngo accepts a job in North Carolina. Before he goes, Ngo tells Johnny that scared men see tigers everywhere and suggests that Johnny let it go.



Chuck graduates from high school. At a get together at the Chatsworths, Johnny has a vision that the graduating class is going to be involved in a fire. There are no lightning rods on the roof of the place the kids plan to have their big celebration and the place will burn. Johnny's trance scares everyone, including Johnny. Johnny goes into the house with Roger and wants to know what Cathy's is - Roger explains that it is "a very fancy steakhouse" where the kids have their graduation parties. It's a tradition. Johnny begs Roger to keep Johnny at home. Roger does not believe in the vision. Johnny speaks with Chuck who felt the shock when he hugged Johnny earlier. Chuck is not sure what to believe but his girlfriend is scared and refuses to go to the party. In a last ditch effort, Johnny decides to go to Cathy's and try to talk the owner into canceling the party. Roger says that for Johnny's peace of mind, there can be a party at the house.

Roger, Johnny and Chuck meet with the owner of Cathy's who thinks Johnny is a nut. Johnny knows that there are no lightning rods. No matter what they say, the owner will not close. The owner lies about the lightning rods.

The party at the Chatsworths is a hit. Chuck had called as many people as he could think of and in the end, about half the senior class went to the house rather than to Cathy's. Johnny's health is deteriorating and it is beginning to show even more. With the party underway, Johnny and Roger set up to play cribbage. Later in the evening, a newsflash comes on the radio and announces that Cathy's has burned. Hysteria reigns.

Chapter twenty-four picks up after Johnny has left the Chatsworth home. Roger writes Johnny a letter begging him to take payment for saving Chuck's life. Roger says that he will continue to track Johnny down and simply cannot let it go. Roger has paid off the balance of Johnny's hospital bills and will continue to send checks. Another letter is from Herb who is happy to hear that Johnny is better and sounds like his old self. Dr. Weizak has expressed concern that Johnny is having frequent headaches and wants him to go to a specialist in Phoenix where Johnny has ended up. Herb also tells Johnny that he has seen Roger Chatsworth and says that Roger is still trying to pay penance for the whole issue surrounding the fire.

There are also letters from Chuck, catching up on his life. There is also some discussion about Stillson and how everyone thinks that man is doing a good job. Roger is even thinking about recanting his statements about Stillson being the village fool.

In Spring 1978, Johnny reads a newspaper article about the FBI agent who had been tracking Stillson. The man was mysteriously murdered in a parking garage.

Part 2: Chapters 21-24 Analysis

Neither Johnny nor the authorities are telling the whole story in regards to Stillson. The feds know all about Johnny so they can only speculate on what he saw. Johnny is not sure why he doesn't tell the cops everything except that it is highly unlikely that they will believe him. Johnny plans to take their advice and stay away from Stillson yet had no



intention of letting it go. Stillson is entirely too dangerous. Vera's voice keeps telling Johnny to do his duty.

Ngo's story of the laughing tiger makes sense to Johnny. Ngo has seen some terrible things which make his statement about killing the tiger seem reasonable. This is where the first inclination to kill Stillson begins to form. It grows as Johnny begins to ask people if they would have killed Hitler if given the chance.

Perhaps the most traumatic incident is the fire at Cathy's. The vision is strong and terrifying to Johnny because he and Chuck are so close. Although Roger and Shelly do not believe in the whole thing, they try to ease Johnny's mind by having the class over to their house for the graduation party. Everyone becomes hysterical when the news comes that Cathy's has burned down. Some people even blame Johnny for setting the fire although it is ridiculous.

Johnny leaves the Chatsworths because he can no longer stand to be surrounded by the media and what happened that awful night. Roger tracks Johnny to Fort Lauderdale and then to Arizona trying to pay penance for not believing him or doing more to save the eighty-one kids that died and those that were badly burned or maimed. Johnny repeatedly refuses the money but in the end, accepts it.

Herb is worried about Johnny's declining health and urges him to visit the doctor recommended by Sam Weizak.



Part 2: Chapters 25-27

Part 2: Chapters 25-27 Summary

Chapter twenty-five details Johnny's ongoing collection of materials on Greg Stillson. Also included are newspaper clippings about the fire at Cathy's and how the death toll had climbed to ninety people.

In the numerous notebooks Johnny kept on Stillson, there were also notes jotted in the margins. Johnny has lengthy conversations with himself about what should be done. Stillson has already been re-elected and has formed his own political party. Johnny ponders several ways in which Stillson could be hindered or stopped. However, only two have any real merit - maiming and killing. Killing Stillson is the best option. At first Johnny is convinced that there is still time but soon Johnny finds out that he may not have much time left.

Chapter twenty-six details the beginning of the end in regards to Johnny's obsession with Stillson. Johnny buys a gun and an attaché case and goes back to New Hampshire. The headaches are getting worse. Once in New Hampshire, Johnny finds out that Stillson has town hall meetings nearly every weekend - it is just a matter of finding out when and where. On the train ride to New York and the Greyhound to New Hampshire, Johnny thinks about his plan and begins to write letters. Johnny regrets the effect this will have on Herb and Charlene.

In chapter twenty-seven Johnny goes to the place where Stillson is scheduled to be that weekend. It is an all purpose place where town meetings are held and driver's license tests are taken. Johnny takes a camera and goes to the site pretending to be a freelance writer. While there, a kid questions Johnny on his work, saying that he wants to be a photographer. Johnny bluffs as best he can and the kid is called away for his test.

Johnny mails letters to Herb, Sarah, Sam Weizak and Sheriff Bannerman before going back to the town hall under the cover of the night. Johnny has his gun in the attaché case and settles in to wait for the meeting to begin. While there, Johnny can see and feel those who have been in that same gallery before, including their secrets.

The wait is long and the building is cold. As the morning progresses, a custodian lights a fire in the stove and people begin to file in. At long last, the time has come for Stillson to approach the podium. Johnny stands up and takes his shot. Johnny misses and tries again to no avail. Chaos ensues below. Johnny is having visions again but they are unclear and keep changing. There is shouting and Stillson has picked up a child and held the boy in front of him to protect his own body. Johnny is shot and as he lay dying, Stillson comes over and asks if they know each other. Stillson remembers the Trimbull rally. With his last bit of strength, Johnny reaches out and grabs Stillson's ankle. Everything has changed. The plan worked. Johnny dies.



Part 2: Chapters 25-27 Analysis

It is obvious that something is wrong with Johnny by the "fireworks" that keep exploding in his head and the weakness he experiences. Johnny knows that there is not much time left and he must kill Stillson before it is too late.

The letters Johnny writes are goodbye letters with explanations to the people he loves the most. Johnny is sorry that they will have to deal with the aftermath of what he is about to do.

Johnny is determined now. When the shots miss Stillson, Johnny thinks that he has blown his chance to make it right. What Johnny does not realize at first is that Stillson has picked up a child and used him as a shield. Meanwhile, someone snapped a picture. Stillson's career is dead. Even Stillson thinks that there is still a way out of the mess and he sends his henchmen to destroy that photo although he has to know that it is too late.

Johnny welcomes death as he knew it was time.



Part 3

Part 3 Summary

Part three, Notes from the Dead Zone contains letters from Johnny as well as follow up details to complete the story.

The first letter is to Herb. In the letter, Johnny explains everything about Stillson. Johnny knows that it sounds crazy but Herb has seen enough to know that his son is telling the truth. Johnny finally reveals what he saw in the vision of Stillson. There would be an all out nuclear war that starts in South Africa. What might have started out as a war between two or three countries ends up involving twenty countries or more plus various terrorist groups. Johnny reminds Herb of Vera's warning not to run away from his duty. That is exactly what Johnny was doing in Phoenix.

The frequent headaches were only part of what was going on with Johnny. There were other incidents including one while he worked on a road crew that involved everything going haywire and Johnny losing consciousness. Although it was not certain until confirmed by a specialist, Johnny knew he had a brain tumor. It was in the place in the brain Johnny called the dead zone. Johnny says he believes this was always his fate and that Herb should know it is not the tumor talking. Johnny says goodbye to his father.

Interspersed throughout the letter are pieces of a trial in which various witnesses and doctors testified that Johnny was of sound mind the whole time. Interviewees included Sam Weizak, co-workers from Phoenix, as well as the pesky kid who ended up making his professional debut as a photographer with a photo of Greg Stillson shielding his body with a child.

There is no further mention of Greg Stillson.

It is much later when Sarah decides that it is finally time to visit Johnny's grave. The text includes the letter Johnny wrote just before he died. Johnny urged Sarah to call Herb for details because he couldn't bear to write it out twice. Sarah is devastated over everything and it is extremely difficult for her to make the trip to Pownal.

Once at the cemetery, Sarah speaks to Johnny and grieves over his stolen life and their once bright future together.

Part 3 Analysis

This part ties up all the loose ends. Although Greg Stillson is never mentioned again, it is clear that his career is over.

The hearings involving Johnny's state of mind and testimony regarding the shootings are almost superfluous except to detail Johnny's progressive brain tumor.



Johnny feels guilty about dumping everything on his father but has no choice. Johnny knows that Herb will understand and get through it.

Sarah waited nine years before going to visit Johnny's grave. The man she once loved is still a big part of her and Sarah switches between grieving and anger. Having made as much peace as possible with the situation, Sarah goes back home.



Characters

John Smith

John Smith is the main character in Stephen King's "The Dead Zone." The story starts out with Johnny at age six, a carefree, happy boy whose only concern is to learn how to ice skate backwards like one of the older boys. An only child, Johnny has a typical childhood with no major crises or traumas. The story picks up again after Johnny graduates from college and begins a relationship with a fellow teacher, Sarah Bracknell.

By all accounts, Johnny is bright and good at his job although his methods may be slightly unorthodox. Johnny is the one that everybody likes, with a quick wit and an easy smile. These qualities are what Sarah falls in love with rather quickly.

There is a sense of strength about Johnny's character that will not let him give up, even after all the pain and suffering caused by the accident. Nothing would please Johnny more than to return to teaching since it's the only thing he knows. Johnny is a good teacher and truly cares about the students. When the psychic abilities ruin his chances at returning to his old job at the high school, Johnny is devastated.

Despite the passage of time, there are no changes in Johnny's immediate world when he wakes from the coma. Johnny is still in his early twenties and in love with Sarah Bracknell. Adapting to the new world is difficult physically and emotionally.

As much as Johnny tries to escape himself and the new found abilities, he finds that the task is impossible and must do his part to save the world from the evil that lurks within Greg Stillson, regardless of the consequences.

Greg Stillson

Greg Stillson is the character in the book that Johnny is destined to stop before he becomes president and starts a nuclear war.

In the beginning of the story, Stillson is a twenty-two year old man who works as a door-to-door Bible sales man in the Midwest. It is clear from the beginning that Stillson is a twisted individual with a volatile temper. The first incident involves Stillson killing a dog that attempts to protect its territory. Even at an early age, Stillson is a power hungry man who will do whatever it takes to make a living and to gain power over others.

The story picks up again in 1971 when Stillson operates a successful insurance and real estate business. Stillson is now 38 years old, a bit heavier and his hair a bit longer and thinner. By this time, Stillson has hooked up with Sonny Elliman, President of the Dirty Dozen bikers' club, a man who has become Stillson's enforcer. By this time, Stillson has his eye set on becoming the town mayor before moving on to the houses of Congress and an eventual stint in the White House. Stillson is crazy and violent,



although the man sees it as a means to an end and no one who crosses him is apt to make the same mistake again.

Like many men with a messianic complex, Stillson is charming and wins people over easily. Those who do not cooperate tend to end up in unfortunate circumstances, including hospitals and/or coffins.

Sarah Bracknell Hazlett

Johnny's love interest and witness to the first major psychic event.

Herb Smith

Johnny's father.

Vera Smith

Johnny's mother.

Sam Weizak

Johnny's neurologist and friend. Dr. Weizak is the first to experience the full impact of Johnny's abilities after coming out of the coma.

Chuck Chatsworth

Johnny's teenage student who has difficulty reading.

Roger Chatsworth

Chuck Chatsworth's father and successful businessman.

Shelly Chatsworth

Chuck Chatsworth's mother.

Sonny Elliman

Greg Stillson's right hand man and enforcer.



Objects/Places

The Dead Zone

The Dead Zone is the place in the mind where things from memory go and cannot be retrieved. It is also the place where vital pieces information hides, information that makes it harder for Johnny to focus on the task at hand.

When Johnny comes out of the coma, he is subjected to a great deal of neurological and psychological testing. Although the doctors are unable to tell what has been damaged or how much damage has been done, it is obvious that there are problems with memory and recognition when it comes to certain items. In the initial testing, Johnny is unable to imagine certain simple items in his mind. While this is disturbing, particularly since it is unknown if the condition is permanent, there is nothing that can be done to rectify it.

When Johnny begins to have visions, there are always parts of the visions that remain hidden in the Dead Zone. These include simple things like street names and numbers, which could help to solve and prevent crimes. There are also instances in which Johnny is unsure about some information but may be able to find a way to work around it.

Toward the end of the story, the impact of the Dead Zone is compounded by the fact that Johnny sees everything involving Stillson through a blue filter.

Maine

"The Dead Zone" by Stephen King takes place mostly in Maine. King is known for using his home state as a backdrop for the majority of his work. As a resident of Maine, King is able to add a great number of details and feeling of authenticity to the locations in his works, whether or not the actual town is fictional.

In this story, Johnny Smith lives in Pownal, Maine, a small town out in the country. Pownal is the type of place where everyone knows his neighbors and the neighbors are friendly as well as protective. When Johnny moves to Cleaves Mills, the atmosphere changes only slightly and the overall feel of the town is much like Pownal in that everyone knows everybody's business. This is the main reason Johnny leaves Sarah's apartment to go home after the carnival, so her reputation will be protected.

Other areas of Maine that are mentioned include the location of Eastern Maine Med, the hospital where Johnny spends five years, as well as Bangor and the town of Orono, which is home to the University of Maine.



Pownal

Hometown to Johnny Smith

Phoenix

City where Johnny relocates after fleeing from the Chatsworth house and the first disaster predicted by Johnny.

Cleaves Mills

Town where Johnny and Sarah live and teach.

New Hampshire

Home to the Chatsworth family and the state in which Stillson runs for Congress.

Carnival

Site of the first major episode with Johnny's abilities involving the Wheel of Fortune.

Smith house

Home to Herb, Vera and Johnny Smith. Located in Pownal, Maine.

Eastern Maine Med

Hospital where Johnny spent five years after his near-fatal accident.

Chatsworth House

Home to Roger, Shelly and Chuck Chatsworth and where Johnny lived while acting as a tutor.

Cathy's

Restaurant and lounge where the high school kids have their graduation party and the site of the first disaster predicted by Johnny.



Themes

Fanaticism

Vera Smith is a wife and mother who depends heavily on her religious beliefs. When Johnny goes into a coma Vera begins to go off the deep end with an obsession with Scripture and communicating with other fanatics who believe in various religions, some that are universally accepted and some that are outrageous. Vera's husband Herb tries to talk sense into his wife, and the fanaticism causes friction in the marriage. Johnny's condition does not change and Vera is convinced that God has a divine plan for Johnny and believes that her son will come out of the coma to fulfill a divine prophecy. Herb has tried to talk sense to his wife and in the end he must settle for trying to keep her from frivolously giving away all the family's money to religious cults, who believe that spaceships will come to take them all to heaven or that God lives in the center of the earth. When Johnny comes out of the coma, Vera preaches to him and to anyone who will listen.

Vera takes her fanaticism to a new level and ceases to take medication even though Herb and Johnny beg to continue. Eventually, Vera has a stroke and dies. As Johnny's psychic gifts progress, he begins to wonder if his mother was right about divine prophecy, although it is unclear to Johnny whether his abilities are a gift or a curse.

Destiny

Johnny Smith spent four and a half years in a coma. Before Johnny's accident he joked to Sarah that he had used up all his luck in one night on the Wheel of Fortune. Later Johnny feels that perhaps his mother was right when she said Johnny came out of the coma because it was his destiny to do God's work. Johnny resents this implication and everything he has to go through as a result of the accident. Johnny simply wants to be alone, get better, and resume his life the way it was before the accident. This includes Johnny's relationship with Sarah, which has obviously ended.

When it is clear that Johnny has received a gift or curse depending on how one looks at it, he realizes that there is no use fighting the power to see the future. Perhaps it was his destiny from the day he fell on the ice and hit his head at age 6. It becomes more obvious when Johnny warns the Chatsworths about the fire at Cathy's and solves the serial murder case involving Frank Dodd that his destiny is to try and change the bad things that are going to happen. It is Johnny's destiny to stop Greg Stillson and although the plan works, Johnny dies at the end.

Self-control

When Johnny comes out of the coma no time has passed for him, even though the rest of world has moved on. It is a difficult situation, missing out on four and half years of



one's life, but nearly impossible to handle the fact that Sarah has moved on with her life, is married and has a child. Johnny must exercise great self-control when it comes to Sarah, the woman Johnny loves. Johnny respects that Sarah is married and has a child, but he feels a great deal of pain over losing her. There has never been nor will there ever be another woman for Johnny. Even when Johnny makes love to Sarah there is self-control, allowing Sarah to set the tone for the encounter. Even after the pair is finally able to spend time together Johnny abides by Sarah's decision to stay apart, although it is incredibly difficult.

Self-control also comes into play regarding Greg Stillson. Johnny wants to forget about the murderous politician, but even self-control cannot keep Johnny from carrying out his destiny.

Self-control may also be seen in Dr. Weizak when he refrains from speaking to his mother, who was thought to be long dead.

Style

Point of View

"The Dead Zone" by Stephen King is written in the third person omniscient point of view. The use of third person omniscient is critical when there are many layers to a story. The reader must be aware of all aspects of the story. The only way to convey the complete picture is to use third person omniscient. In *The Dead Zone*, the point of view works perfectly due to the complex storyline. The story follows several characters from Johnny to Herb and Vera Smith to Greg Stillson.

Greg Stillson has a long violent and disturbing history that is the impetus for his twisted political aspirations. It is important for the reader to know about Stillson's history and how his sadistic personality evolved over the years. Allowing the reader to witness Stillson in his native element works well so that it is obvious the man has a very different view on being a public servant.

Herb and Vera Smith have their own stories to tell as does Sarah. The stories are important to character developments. It is also important to be able to understand all that went on while Johnny was in the coma.

Setting

The main setting in "The Dead Zone" by Stephen King is rural Maine. Runaround Pond, where Johnny has an ice skating accident at age 6, is located in nearby Durham. The Smith house is located in the country near the town of Pownal. The Smith house is traditional with a big front porch and a yard.

When Johnny takes a teaching job at Cleaves Mills high school, he moves to the small town of Cleaves Mills. Cleaves Mills is located not far from Orono and the University of Maine. Cleaves Mills is a town containing two dozen stores, a factory, and one stoplight. Johnny has an apartment on the second floor, jokingly referred to as the penthouse.

King does a good job in describing the local Carnival, where Johnny and Sarah have their last date before the car accident. The reader is able to see and feel the things that are familiar and associated with a county fair, from cotton candy to carnival barkers to the Ferris wheel.

In order to get away from Pownal Johnny takes a job as a tutor in Kittery, New Hampshire at Roger and Shelly Chatsworths' house. Johnny student is their only son Chuck. Johnny and Chuck spend many summer days outdoors by the pool reading summer assignments that will allow Chuck to continue to play sports and graduate. Johnny lives on the premises in a guest house.



Language and Meaning

The language used in *The Dead Zone* is typically conversational in regards to the dialogue. The book is set in the 1970s, from 1970 to 1978, and therefore uses some of the popular words for slang in that time period. The use of slang is sparing and not enough to make the text difficult to follow or understand.

There are some uses of professional jargon. This is seen mostly in medical terms regarding Johnny's accident, injuries, and brain tumor. There is also the use of some academic vernacular used when Johnny and Sarah discusses certain school policies in reference to classes as well as teachers and administration. Johnny and Roger Chatsworth also use some specific language when they discuss possible reading problems, ideas, and possible solutions for Chuck. Many of these terms are commonly known to the general public, such as dyslexia and generalized reading phobia.

Lastly, technical language is used by the young photographer that quizzes Johnny on his camera abilities and techniques at the polling place prior to the assassination attempt on Greg Stillson. It is that same photographer that manages to capture the award winning shot of Greg Stillson protecting himself behind the body of a small child.

Structure

"*The Dead Zone*" by Stephen King is a work of fiction comprised of 402 pages. There are four sections in the text. They include the Prologue; Part One, "The Wheel of Fortune," Part Two, "The Laughing Tiger," and Part Three, "Notes from the Dead Zone."

The prologue is comprised of 10 pages.

Part One, "The Wheel of Fortune," is comprised of 250 pages and is broken down into 16 chapters. The shortest chapter is four pages; the longest chapter is 52 pages in length. The average length of the chapters is 14 pages.

Part Two, "The Laughing Tiger," is comprised of 126 pages and is broken down into 11 chapters. The shortest chapter is four pages; the longest chapter is 22 pages. The average length of the chapters is 10 pages.

Part Three, "Notes from the Dead Zone," is comprised of 13 pages contained in one chapter.

The average length of the four parts is 99 pages.

Part one is the largest section and covers everything from the beginning of the story, through the accident and coma, as well as Johnny's return to society.

Part two details Johnny's experiences with psychic abilities, as well as his experiences with Greg Stillson.

Part three contains the letters that Johnny writes, which will most likely be read after his death. The section also contains part of the trial regarding Greg Stillson and the assassination attempt.



Quotes

"By the time he graduated from college, John Smith had forgotten all about the bad fall he took on the ice that January day in 1953."

Page 1

"Johnny, on the face of it, appeared to be the antithesis of everything a good teacher should be."

Page 16

"God has put his mark on my Johnny and I rejoice."

Page 61

"She read a good deal about head injuries, homeless, and brain damage. None of it was very encouraging."

Page 70

"He was alone now, walking down this gloomy and deserted hall of shadows. And it began to seem to him that it wasn't an illusion or a mirage or a dream - at least not of the ordinary kind."

Page 94

"The faces, like the voices, began to come clearer with time."

Page 95

"He's going to have enough to do just coping with the idea that he's been out like a light for four and half years."

Herb to Vera

Page 105

"It's a great responsibility, Johnny. A great trust. You must be worthy."

Mrs. Smith to Johnny

Page 164

"So many things had gotten strange so fast that all he could do was feel his way slowly along, groping like a blind man in an unfamiliar room."

Page 201

"For the first time since he had come out of it, Johnny felt that time was not his enemy."

Page 205

"If people think I'm a phony, maybe they'll leave me alone."

Johnny to Mr. Smith

Page 213



"Speaking aloud should have also seemed wrong; speaking to the dead in a graveyard was the act of a crazy person, she would have said once."
Page 400

Topics for Discussion

How might things have worked out if Johnny had spent the night with the ailing Sarah?

Do you believe that fate played a role in Johnny's life? Explain.

What do you think happened with Chuck over the next few years?

Do you think Greg Stillson will ever be held accountable for his actions before and during his campaigns?

What might have happened if Johnny hadn't had a brain tumor and died?

Why did it take Sarah so long to visit Johnny's grave? What do you think touched her shoulder at the cemetery?

Do you think it was fair that Johnny was no longer allowed to teach at the high school? Explain.

What was the significance of the blue filter? How might it have changed things?