

Everybody Sees the Ants Study Guide

Everybody Sees the Ants by A.S. King

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Plot Summary

"Everybody Sees the Ants" is a young adult novel by A. S. King which focuses around fifteen year-old Lucky Linderman's attempts to deal with a bully and his complicated family situation.

At the beginning of the novel, Lucky appears as an intelligent fifteen year-old teenager who has experienced years of torment from a bully named Nader McMillan. This bullying is physical and emotional, and affects Lucky heavily. At the same time, Lucky has to deal with his combative parents, Lori and Vic, whom he believes are cold and distant. Lucky is able to escape from reality in his dreams, where in the jungles of Vietnam, Lucky meets, befriends, and tries to help his soldier grandfather escape, thus fulfilling a promise to his grandmother to help his grandfather escape.

Lucky's mother brings the both of them to her brother Dave's house in Arizona, where they stay for three weeks. It is in Arizona that Lucky's life changes for the better. Dave helps Lucky lift weights and shape up, and gives him invaluable advice on how to deal with and handle bullies. Lucky also grows closer to his mother and comes to respect his pill-downing Aunt Jodi, because Dave is having multiple affairs.

Lucky also meets, befriends, and receives his first kiss from Ginny, a beautiful seventeen-year-old girl whose parents use her as a hair model to make money for a company that they run. Ginny runs to Lucky's arms after her mother beats her up for shaving off her hair.

Returning to Pennsylvania, Lucky and his parents all become a stronger family unit. Lori even stands up for her son by giving the final complaint that gets Nader fired from the community pool, and Lucky stands up for himself by confronting Nader, telling Nader that if he ever touches him again, he will call the police. Lucky, in one last dream, buries his grandfather, who has given him his wedding ring to give to Vic. Lucky wakes up with the ring in his hand, and the novel ends with Lucky about to divulge his dreams.



Prologue - Chapter 9

Prologue - Chapter 9 Summary

In the Prologue, for a social studies project in his freshman year at Freddy High, Lucky Linderman poses a survey question to his classmates, about how they would commit suicide if they were going to do so. It causes a commotion. Some others joke about it, but the administration is not happy. The school recommends the case to Lucky's parents, and suggest medication, behavior study, and professional help. Lucky wonders where his professional help was when school bully Nader McMillan was tormenting him throughout his entire school career. Lucky therefore decides to initiate "Operation Don't Ever Smile."

In Chapter 1, Lucky's mother, Lori, is addicted to swimming 200 laps a day, so he spends his summer days at the Frederickstown, Pennsylvania Community Swimming Pool. Lucky's parents have a tempestuous relationship, and are always fighting. Lucky's father is a chef. Lucky's grandfather, Harry, was a sniper in Vietnam, and Lucky pretends every day to be a sniper, and to kill Nader. When a storm passes over, Lucky takes shelter under a pavilion with Lara Jones, a fifteen year-old girl who is about to become a sophomore. They play cards. Danny comes to hang out with them. Danny is friends with Nader, but also friends with Lucky. When Lucky and his mother get home, his father has prepared dinner for them.

In Chapter 2, Nader's girlfriend, Petra Simmons, is a lifeguard, and Lucky finds her incredibly attractive. Also swimming are soon to be senior girl Charlotte Dent and her twenty year-old boyfriend, Ronald. Nader finds Charlotte attractive as well. Charlotte loses her top in the pool, and nobody wants to get it, so Lucky does, and helps her tie it on. Nader works at the pool as well, and is sent home for the day for trying to stop people from helping Charlotte.

In Chapter 3, Lucky's grandmother, Janice, dies when he is seven, of colon cancer. Before she dies, she implores Lucky to save Harry from the jungles of Vietnam, where she believes he is still a prisoner. Lucky first dreams of being in the jungle when he is seven, and meeting a man who says he wishes Frankie (the nickname for his prison guard) would get him a pair of Spiderman pajamas. Lucky realizes it is his grandfather. His second dream a week later reveals his grandfather in a tree, and Lucky asks him for advice about Nader. Harry suggests ignoring Nader, and if it doesn't work, they'll figure out what to do, together. Harry had gone to Vietnam to fight when his number, 14, was called in the draft lottery. Lucky promises to bring his grandfather home.

In Chapter 4, Lucky doesn't know what he should do about Nader, and keeps thinking about Charlotte's topless incident. At dinner, Lucky's father tells him fighting is for sissies. Lucky talks about how he and his family have POW-MIA posters, signs, and flags all over the house. Lucky wants to know why his father has given up on finding his grandfather.



In Chapter 5, Nader and Danny also get in trouble for the survey. In the locker room after gym, Nader tells Lucky to pay attention, and Nader and his friends grab the smallest, scrawniest kid, take his clothes off, and blindfold him. Nader then dips a banana in the toilet and force feeds it to the kid. Nader says that that is what happens to snitches.

That night, Lucky goes on his forty-ninth mission to rescue his grandfather. His grandfather teaches him how to build booby traps, and hands him a cigar. Lucky wakes up from the dream with the cigar still in his hand.

In Chapter 6, Lucky reads about snipers and the Vietnam War. He especially became more interested in the war following his dreams. Lucky even goes through his grandfather's old things. He also reads the last letter his grandfather ever sent to his grandmother. In this letter, Lucky's grandfather explains he is given the nickname "Lucky" for being such a good sniper. Grandma Janice then spends the rest of her life searching for Harry. The last she hears of him, he was seen in a prison camp in Laos in 1987, fourteen years after the end of the war. Lucky has a dream where he fights Frankie after playing cards, and tells his grandfather he will help him escape. When Lucky wakes up, he has dirty cards on his pillow. He puts them in his Transformers box under his bed, along with the dozens of other jungle souvenirs.

In Chapter 7, Lucky makes breakfast at his father's insistence, who wants to teach him how to really cook. Lucky confronts his father, telling him he wants to talk about more than food, and that his father only ever wants to talk about food. Lucky says he needs his father in his life, and Lucky's father tells him he doesn't know a thing about not having a father in his life, and leaves.

In Chapter 8, it is a Tuesday in July. Kim, the pool manager, tells Lucky about the chlorine levels. When Lucky comes out of the dressing room, Nader ambushes him and throws him onto the ground, and smashes his face into the cement, where Lucky sees lots of ants. Nader is angry because Lucky helped Charlotte. Danny arrives and tells Nader to stop, but he doesn't. Nader tells Lucky it is karma, and leaves. Kim finds Lucky, and asks Danny who did this to him, and Danny shrugs, pretending he doesn't know. Kim gets Lucky to reveal it is Nader, and Kim promises disciplinary action. Lucky's mom then brings him away from the pool. Lucky wants to go to Vietnam and stay with his grandfather.

That night, Lucky dreams of swimming. He cannot find his grandfather at first, but then does. His grandfather wants to know who Lucky is planning to trap in the pit he has dug. Lucky says he is doing his job, and his grandfather disappears. The next day, Lucky's father announces they will be going to Tempe, Arizona, for a vacation, to see Uncle Dave, whom Lucky has never met.

In Chapter 9, Lucky and his Mom arrive in Arizona, and are met by Aunt Jodi. Aunt Jodi notices the scab on Lucky's face, but says nothing about it at first. When they get to the house, Aunt Jodi and Lori go swimming, while Lucky naps. Jodi and Dave want to bring Lori and Lucky to the Grand Canyon. Jodi talks about everything in the house being



arranged as it is for positive energy flow. Jodi tells Lucky that his clothing under the window will mess up the energy flow, the "chi". Uncle Dave has to run back to his office, but tells Lucky that he will get him lifting weights so he can kick Nader's face in.

Prologue - Chapter 9 Analysis

Lucky begins the novel as an intelligent, if somewhat seemingly off-center kid, whose controversial survey questionnaire raises the ire and compels the concern of the school administration. Indeed, to the reader, there is nothing apparently wrong with Lucky himself. He has a strenuous home life, with two parents who seem to be more absent than present, with Lucky's father consumed by cooking and Lucky's mother obsessed with swimming laps. Each of the members of the Linderman family have something troubling them, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they need professional help the way Lucky's teachers believe he does.

Despite his situation (the distant family and the unstoppable bullying), Nader does indeed appear to be a good kid. He has no problem coming to the rescue of Charlotte, choosing to retrieve her top to save her from a humiliating situation, made so by Nader. In so doing, Lucky's character is shown as having a sense of moral gravity which seems to lag behind certain elements of his capacity to render judgment -such as finding the suicide questionnaire amusing rather than disturbing.

Interestingly enough, each of Lucky's parents -especially his father- attempt to reach Lucky in ways that Lucky doesn't yet respond to. Lucky's father seeks to spend time with his son cooking, while his mother brings Lucky to the pool while she swims laps. Lucky isn't satisfied with the pursuits of either parent, believing both of them to be lacking in some way. Reaching out, however, will prove to be a vastly important thing in later chapters.



Chapters 10 - 18

Chapters 10 - 18 Summary

In Chapter 10, the next morning, Lucky overhears his mother and Jodi talking, and Jodi says Lucky is depressed. Jodi says that Lori is also depressed, as is her husband, Vic, and they need not to ignore the problems in their lives. After Dave goes to work, Lucky begins reading "Catch-22" by Joseph Heller. Lori swims, and Jodi watches television. Lucky wonders how this is better than life back at home.

Lucky dreams of being interviewed by Dr. Phil about Nader. Dr. Phil tells Lucky he needs to let out what's inside. Lucky's grandfather then comes swinging in to rescue Lucky, and they go to his grandfather's tree. Harry talks about Janice and all their old friends, before the war, and how most of their group of friends was claimed by the war. Lucky talks to his grandfather about his own lack of friends, and his grandfather tells Lucky that Nader is screwing himself out of a good afterlife.

In Chapter 11, Lucky recounts how all of the teachers were interviewed about Lucky and his behavior. All of his teachers like him, except the gym teacher, The Shrew, who reveals Lucky frequently skips her class. Lucky instead decides to do his project on the draft selection system for the Vietnam War.

In Chapter 12, Uncle Dave brings Lucky out to lift weights, and the two talk about Nader, life, and girls. The next morning, Lucky talks to Aunt Jodi, who has lots of healthy problems, from her nerves to her weight. That night, Lucky and Uncle Dave work out some more.

In Chapter 13, Lucky begins seeing the little ants everywhere he goes. Aunt Jodi suggests taking a Prozac pill, but Lucky's mom will have none of it. In the afternoon, Lucky and his mother share some granola snacks, and Lori tells Lucky that she is worried about him, but not as worried as Jodi. Lucky continues lifting with Dave, and Dave explains it is good to use up bad energy. Dave shows Lucky a small scorpion in the corner of the garage, and Lucky thinks of all the small, deadly things in the jungle. At dinner, Dave sticks up for Lucky after Lucky says he'd rather be eaten by a tiger than killed by something so small as a scorpion.

That night, Lucky takes a night walk. He notices a ninja sprinting in between cars, and then disappears. That night, Lucky dreams of rescuing his grandfather, but his grandfather stops him from killing enemy soldiers. Lucky wants to know how he is supposed to rescue his grandfather, if his grandfather won't let him.

In Chapter 14, Lucky helps Dave work in the garage moving things around and washing his and Jodi's cars. He and Dave talk about girls, and Dave encourages Lucky to smile more. Dave and Lucky also talk about Vic, and how he storms out, and Dave thinks that



Vic simply doesn't know how to handle helping Lucky. But Lucky also explains that Vic is mean to his mother, as well.

On Sunday, Aunt Jodi announces they are all going to church. At church, Lucky daydreams about the jungle. Jodi, Dave, and Lucky's mom are also in the daydream. They decide to use Jodi as bait and avoid mosquitoes, and try to rescue Harry. Lucky comes back to church, and smashes a mosquito on his arm. Up on the stage, Lucky sees a girl singing -the ninja from the night walk.

After service, Jodi brings the girl- Virginia- and her parents to meet everyone. Lucky finds Virginia -Ninja Girl- the most mysteriously awesome person ever. Lucky notices Ninja Girl cannot take her eyes off him. Jodi brings everyone out through the side door, avoiding the pastor. Lucky realizes Jodi is not there for God, but for another reason. At dinner, Jodi says that perhaps God has sent Lucky and Lori to them, to help them eat better. But Lucky isn't convinced God would make Nader beat him up for such a purpose. Lucky thinks about his grandfather and Ninja Girl, and wonders why he cares about people who are so far away from him.

In Chapter 15, Lucky recalls getting all of his draft information together for his presentation. He presents, only one person claps, and Lucky's father is unimpressed.

In Chapter 16, Lucky wants to make dinner that night, and Jodi feels insulted. A package arrives for Lucky and Lori. In it are POW-MIA t-shirts for Jodie and Dave, a box of melted chocolates for Lori, and nothing for Lucky. Lucky and his mother then go shopping for ingredients. Lucky prepares a chicken marinade over rice for dinner. Dave continues weight-lifting with Lucky. Dave explains that in school, he was himself a bully, because he was gutless, and because he was jealous of other kids having guts. This causes Lucky to feel better, and genuinely smile.

In Lucky's dream, he is Frankie's prisoner, and Frankie and a tiger are asking where someone is. Lucky breaks free and strangles the tiger, grabs a pistol, and goes to find his grandfather. He finds his grandfather, who gives him a black headband. They try to escape, but Lucky wakes up before his grandfather is freed. The black headband is still around Lucky's head.

In Chapter 17, Lucky makes eggs for breakfast, and earns praise from Aunt Jodi. Lucky later overhears Jodi telling his mother that he is strange because he cooks. She thinks Lucky may end up shooting up a school.

That night, Lucky goes for another night walk, and comes across Virginia, Ninja Girl. She tells him to call her Ginny, and that she is a hair model. They get to talking. Virginia is seventeen, and smokes cigarettes, and Lucky lies, saying he is almost sixteen. She invites him to rehearsal with her friends, who are practicing the "Vagina Monologues". Lucky feels out of place, so he daydreams about his grandfather. They have to rescue Ginny and her friends, who when they board the ship that Lucky and his grandfather control, are transformed and wear dresses. They all dance. Lucky is brought back to reality by the slam of a door. Ginny and Lucky head home, and Ginny reveals the



names of her friends as Shannon, Annie, Maya, and Karen. It is two in the morning when Ginny and Lucky part, and Ginny invites Lucky to their show the following weekend.

In Chapter 18, Lucky cannot believe he has been out with five older girls. He goes out into the living room the next morning to find Aunt Jodi, his mother, and three professionals sitting on the couch. They question Lucky about his habits, and Lucky's mom leaps to his defense. Jodi and Lori begin arguing, and Lucky heads in to pack. Dave won't let them go to a hotel, and Lori and Lucky decide to tough things out. Lori explains to Lucky that Lucky's father burned out after watching his mother try for thirty years to find Harry.

Chapters 10 - 18 Analysis

While in Arizona, Lucky begins to bond with his Uncle Dave, who, like Lucky's grandfather, becomes something of a father figure to Lucky. At the same time, Lucky begins seeing ants everywhere he goes following Nader's brutal beat down at the pool. These ants appear to offer advice, cheer Lucky on, and even provide a modicum of comic relief where needed.

Without the oppressive weight that Lucky's father seems to exert on him, Lucky moves into his own, learning to lift weights with Dave, and even cooking for Lori and Jodi. It is also explained to Lucky that taking walks at night in Arizona can do good, and this is advice that Lucky takes. It also proves to be pivotal advice, for it brings Lucky into an orbit which includes Ginny, the Ninja Girl. Hanging out with Ginny and her friends is an immense confidence boost to Lucky, who had never before done something of the sort.

At the same time that Lucky's confidence is beginning to grow, so too is his awareness of his parents. As Lori and Lucky grow closer, Lori begins revealing certain things about Lucky's father. Vic isn't necessarily cold or distant, but tired and exhausted from seeing his mother live in such agony searching for Harry for more than thirty years, and being unable to do anything to help. Harry furthermore has grown up without Harry as a father, and this has also given him much pause over how to handle his role as a father. In an Hegelian way, Lucky has removed himself from his situation, has turned an intensely critical eye on the situation, and is now learning more about things -and even slowly coming around to respecting such things.



Chapters 19 - 27

Chapters 19 - 27 Summary

In Chapter 19, Lucky, Lori, Jodi, and Dave leave for the Grand Canyon. Lucky is blown away by the beauty and grandeur. They check into their hotel, and Lucky and Dave go hiking on Bright Angel Trail. Dave is thrilled when Lucky tells him he hung out with a girl and her friends. Lucky explains to Dave how he ended up in Arizona, not because he wanted to kill himself, but because of the questionnaire at school. Dave tells Lucky that he can always talk to him, and Lucky considers Dave the father he never had.

In Chapter 20, as they drive around to take pictures, Lucky, Lori, Jodi, and Dave come across a group of college kids daring two of their friends to head out on the edge of the canyon. When they leave, Lucky thinks about how a split second can change everything. Lucky realizes his life is worth more than throwing it away. Dave and Lori later recount how severely their mother reprimanded Dave for being a bully at school.

In his dreams that night, Lucky and his grandfather are making turtles. Harry tells his grandson he has cheated him out of a father and a good life; Lucky says his father is old enough to know he is able to control his own destiny. Harry says that by cooking, Lucky has found a way to meet his father halfway.

In Chapter 21, Lucky recounts that despite the humorous intention of the questionnaire, kids really were thinking about killing themselves at school, for one reason or another. This causes him to reflect on Charlotte, and not knowing why Charlotte hates Nader.

In Chapter 22, Lucky finds pictures of Ginny as a hair model in Jodi's magazines. Lucky and Dave watch Caddyshack, because he says every male should watch it at least once. Lori and Lucky decide to go to church with Dave and Jodi, feeling they owe them after the Grand Canyon trip. Lucky watches the back of Ginny's head the entire time, as she is sitting in front of them. After the service, Ginny gives Lucky a strange look, and Lucky is curious as to why.

Jodi talks to Lucky, saying that perhaps everything is his fault, from the school project to his parents fighting. Lucky tells her she has it all wrong, but Lucky can't help but think maybe some things are his fault.

In Chapter 23, Lori wonders if going to visit her brother and sister-in-law was a mistake, but Lucky encourages her, telling her that one day they will laugh about it. When Lucky and Dave work out that night, Lucky goes for a night walk, and comes across Ginny. Ginny says that Jodi is crazy because Dave cheats on her all the time, including with Ginny's mom. They go for a ride on a bus, and then get off at a place unknown to Lucky. She brings him to see her picture on a billboard. Ginny explains she is not happy with her fame, because it has all been decided for her by parents, teachers, and instructors. When they head back, Ginny kisses Lucky on the cheek, and Lucky is happy.



That night, Lucky dreams of almost rescuing his grandfather again. In the dream, Lucky makes out with Lara, and is betrayed by Nader. Lucky awakes from his dream, crying a little.

In Chapter 24, Lucky's perception of Dave has changed, and he can't stop thinking that Dave is an adulterer. Lucky decides to make Jodi an amazing lunch, consisting of chicken breast and sauce. Jodi is blown away. Both Jodi and Lori tease Lucky about being an item with Ginny. Lucky reveals that he has never even kissed a girl.

In Chapter 25, Wednesday rolls around and Lucky and Ginny meet up once more. Lucky tells her about his grandfather being a POW-MIA, and about his being bullied by Nader. Ginny reveals she is secretly dating a boy who has already graduated. Ginny and Lucky talk about sex, and she kisses him, saying the first time with a girl is like a first kiss- full of fear, excitement, and white noise. Lucky also reveals to the reader that the kid that was blindfolded in the earlier chapters was actually him, not someone else. Lucky goes to rehearsal again, and enjoys the play.

In Chapter 26, Lucky recounts late April, when Charlotte slips another questionnaire response to Lucky, about hanging herself the following week. In Lucky's dream, Charlotte, Lucky, and his grandfather talk about Charlotte possibly killing herself. On the bus the next day, Lucky is considering what to do with the noose he made himself, when Danny shows up to tell Lucky that Nader is not finished with him. Lucky says Nader and Danny are going to get in trouble for rushing girls, but Danny laughs it off, saying the only reason girls have breasts is to grab them. Lucky conveys the grabbing to the school counselor, who writes it off as a rumor.

In Chapter 27, Ginny is trying to figure out how to sneak out of her house on Friday night. She comes up with a plan, but won't tell anyone. As Ginny and Lucky walk, she announces she is going to shave her head, but Lucky protests. He ultimately concedes that she would be pretty without hair, and that she would be amazing no matter what. They kiss.

That night, Lucky dreams of Nader McMillan, rocking back and forth in the corner of a hut. Nader asks for help, and Lucky rejects his request. But Harry tells Lucky that the past is the past, and that Lucky is in control now. He also questions Lucky and his life's mission, and Lucky wonders if he is or is not supposed to rescue his grandfather.

Chapters 19 - 27 Analysis

Just as the Grand Canyon is a monumental physical feature of the United States, so too does the Grand Canyon have a powerful and monumental effect on Lucky. By visiting the Grand Canyon, Lucky comes to realize that his life is worth something important, and that throwing it away in a split second is worthless. Life means too much, he realizes, and here, his character shows tremendous growth.

The inclusion of Ginny not only gives Lucky more confidence, but also presents him with someone else who seems to have no control over her life. For Ginny, her career as a

hair model seems a foregone conclusion. This also causes Lucky to reflect on his own life, in terms of how he lives in daily fear from Nader.

At the same time, Ginny and Lucky begin opening up more and more to one another. They find they trust one another, and this leads Ginny to reveal she has an older boyfriend who has already graduated high school, and Lucky to explain about how his grandfather never returned from Vietnam, and how it decimated the family.

Interestingly enough, Harry becomes more and more of a constant father figure to Lucky, offering him sound advice about not always living in the past. Indeed, it is through Harry that Lucky learns his life is truly in his own hands, that he is in control now. This will have tremendous consequences for Lucky through the final chapters of the novel.



Chapters 28 - 34

Chapters 28 - 34 Summary

In Chapter 28, Aunt Jodi brings Lucky and Lori to an old gold mine, now a tourist attraction. While they are there, Lucky asks his mom if she is okay to go back to Pennsylvania. She says she is ready, and that the entire trip was mainly about her getting away. Lucky says that Dave has taught him a lot of stuff, and he feels better. They both agree Jodi has redeeming qualities. The day, and the week, both wind down. Lucky is looking forward to Friday, not only to leave, but to see Ginny again.

In Chapter 29, Friday morning, Lucky's mom is helping to do laundry. As Lucky goes looking for Ginny, he thinks about his father, who has been home alone for three weeks, raising the POW-MIA flag at home, going to work, coming home, and lowering the flag -all he has ever had of Harry. Lucky is now disgusted by Dave, and refuses to lift weights with him. The doorbell rings, and Ginny is there, her head nearly bald, and Lucky holds her and hugs her. After her mother discovered her head, Ginny's mother punches her again and again, telling her that her career is over. Ginny and Lucky then go to the maintenance shed on the playground, where Ginny keeps cigarettes. Lucky kisses all of her bruises.

Before the show, Shannon and the other girls express outrage over what has happened to Ginny. Soon thereafter, the play begins. Afterward, Lucky says goodbye to Ginny, who tells him to stand up for himself, and that real friends act like friends. Lucky and Lori say goodbye to Aunt Jodi, and take a taxi to the airport because Dave is not home, supposedly being in the office for an emergency.

In Lucky's dream, his grandfather is being held captive by ants in party hats. They are playing Twister. Everyone sees the ants, Harry explains, because everyone has been a victim of something at some point.

In Chapter 30, when they arrive back in Pennsylvania, Lucky's mother asks his father if he has spoken to Nader's father, but Lucky's father has not. Lucky realizes, upon his return home, that if he wants anything to change for himself, he has to do it for himself. Lucky's father is happy to hear that he has been cooking, and to see that he is smiling a lot. Lucky's dad agrees to help secure him a weight set.

In his dreams, Lucky and Harry are besieged by bananas raining down from the sky. When Lucky smiles a real smile, the bananas stop, and he is in a tree with his grandfather. His grandfather tells him that he cannot be rescued, but that Lucky's purpose isn't to rescue him, but to escape at home.

In Chapter 31, the previous year, before the summer, Lucky recalls encountering Charlotte after Charlotte has been crying. Lucky is worried about Charlotte, but



Charlotte brushes him off. Another questionnaire appears in Lucky's locker later on, with a thanks and an "I'm okay" written down.

In Chapter 32, at the pool, Nader is quick to taunt Lucky once more. Lara and her mom show up, and Lara is happy to see Lucky. Lucky realizes he now has a thing for her. Lara reveals that in Lucky's absence, Charlotte's top came off at the pool, and Nader made her get her own top, causing lots of people to become angry with Nader. Lara and Lucky later play cards. Lori then confronts Kim, and reveals to her son that Nader may indeed get fired.

In Lucky's dream that night, he realizes how his grandfather has been a father to him. Lucky tells his grandfather that he will talk to Nader, face to face. Harry tells Lucky they have also fixed Vic. But with that, his grandfather disappears.

In Chapter 33, Lucky's family begins feeling like a normal family to him, and he swims laps with his mother. When Lara arrives, she tells Lucky that Nader was fired the night before. When Lucky and his mother leave, Nader is by the gate, talking to some of the other lifeguards, and Lucky goes over to talk to him. Lucky tells Nader that if he ever touches him again, he will call the police. Kim then arrives to tell Nader to get what he came to get, and leave. At the same time, Ronald arrives, and lifts Danny up by the shirt and face, asking where Nader is. Ronald finds Nader in the chemical shed, during which time loud, violent sounds can be heard, and then Ronald emerges, sweaty, and with a little blood on his chest.

That night, Lucky helps his father cook dinner. In his dreams, Lucky dreams of his grandfather once more. Lucky explains he's figuring out how to be happy. Harry gives Lucky his wedding ring, and tells him to wear it. Lucky's grandmother, Janice, is also there. Harry leads Lucky to a grave, and asks Lucky to tell Vic that he loved him more than he ever loved anything in his life. When Lucky opens his eyes, Harry is lying at the bottom of the grave, motionless, and Lucky buries him. When Lucky wakes up, it is 3:34 in the morning, and he is covered with sweat and dirt, and has the wedding ring in his hand.

In Chapter 34, the next day, Lucky sits down with his father at the dinner table, and puts the wedding ring between them. Vic wants to know where the ring came from, and Lucky tells him he has something to say.

Chapters 28 - 34 Analysis

As the days begin to wind down, and the return to Pennsylvania is imminent, the trust that Lucky has secured from Ginny shows clearly when Ginny, having been savagely assaulted by her mother for shaving off her hair, runs to Lucky. Lucky's strong moral center again comes to light when he cares for Ginny, and kisses all of her bruises.

Back in Pennsylvania, taking into account that he is in control now, Lucky realizes that any changes he wants to see in his own life will have to come from him, because of him. Harry also explains to Lucky that they have fixed Vic, which Lucky does not yet quite



understand. Lucky also discovers that he, like his parents, has the ability to reach out, and he does so -first by swimming laps with his mother, and then by cooking with his father. The parent isn't the only member of the family that is supposed to reach out. Despite the new-found closeness of the family, Lucky dreams of burying his grandfather. A huge phase in Lucky's life has come and gone, and the next chapter can now be written.

Lucky, at the end of the novel, is not only confident, but courageous. His moral center has grown as well, and he finally has a better family.

Yet, if that wasn't enough for Lucky, Nader's ways of bullying finally catch up to him. Not only does Lucky stand up to Nader, telling Nader he will take no more abuse, but Ronald, Charlotte's girlfriend, seeks Nader out and beats him up for harassing Charlotte. The end of the novel deals with Lucky preparing to tell his father about Harry, and Lucky has the wedding ring to prove everything.



Characters

Lucky Linderman

Lucky Linderman is the main character and principle protagonist of the novel "Everybody Sees the Ants" by A. S. King. Lucky begins the novel as an intelligent fifteen-year-old teenager who has experienced years of torment from the bully Nader McMillan. Lucky believes his combative parents are cold and distant, and desperately wants a better life. He escapes in dreams and daydreams to the jungles of Vietnam, where he meets and converses with his grandfather, seeking to fulfill a promise to his grandmother to help his grandfather escape.

Hoping to give Lucky (and herself) a break, Lucky's mother, Lori, brings the both of them to her brother Dave's house in Arizona, where they stay for three weeks. In Arizona, Lucky's life changes dramatically for the better. His Uncle Dave helps Lucky learn how to lift weights, and gives him invaluable advice on how to deal with and handle bullies. Over the course of these three weeks, Lucky also grows closer to his mother and comes to respect Aunt Jodi, who was originally written off as crazy, because Dave is cheating on her all the time. Lucky also meets, befriends, and receives his first kiss from Ginny, a beautiful girl whose parents use her as a hair model to make money for a company they run. Ginny helps to grow Lucky's confidence, and she runs to his arms after her mother beats her up for shaving off her hair.

When Lucky returns to Pennsylvania, he and his parents all become much closer, and form a stronger bond between them. Lori stands up for her son by lodging the final complaint that gets Nader fired from the pool, and Lucky stands up for himself by confronting Nader, telling Nader that if he ever touches him again, he will call the police. In a final dream, Lucky buries his grandfather, who has given him his wedding ring to give to Vic. Lucky wakes up with the ring in his hand, and tells his father that he has something to tell him.

Lori Linderman

Lori Linderman is the wife of Vic and mother of Lucky. She is the sister of Dave. Lori and her husband have a combative relationship, and she swims constantly to help deal with the emotional pain. She seems distant, but is in actuality a very caring and devoted mother to Lucky, and their relationship grows while they are visiting Dave in Arizona. Lori desperately wants Vic to intervene on Lucky's behalf by speaking to Nader's father, but Vic will not. Ultimately, Lori takes matters into her own hand by filing the the complaint that gets Nader fired from the swimming pool.



Vic Linderman

Vic Linderman is the husband of Lori, father of Lucky, and son of Harry and Janice. Vic has grown up without his father, and appears to be a cold and distant man who doesn't get along with his wife. In reality, Vic is lonely and unsure, having grown up without Harry in his life. As such, he has few ways to connect with Lucky, but is pleasantly surprised to discover his son has a knack for cooking. They begin building their father-son relationship around cooking, and Vic's relationship with Lori also improves dramatically when she and Lucky return from Arizona.

Aunt Jodi

Aunt Jodi is the husband of Dave, and the sister-in-law of Lori. She is described as crazy, and she takes a multitude of pills everyday, including Prozac to deal with depression. At first, Lucky believes she is simply psychotic, but later learns that her self-medication and embracing of theories like feng shui are probably to help her cope with her knowledge of Dave's activities. In so doing, Aunt Jodi provides Lucky with an example of how to look past the surface of people.

Uncle Dave

Uncle Dave is the husband of Jodi and the brother of Lori. It is to Dave and Jodi's home that Lori and Lucky venture. While there, Dave teaches Lucky how to lift weights, and offers him sound advice on how to deal with bullies. Dave himself was once a bully, and according to Ginny, Dave is an adulterer who cheats on Jodi all the time, including with Ginny's own mother. At first, Lucky has a good rapport and a strong relationship with Dave, but after Dave's failures are revealed, Dave disgusts Lucky.

Ginny/Ninja Girl

Ginny is the beautiful seventeen year-old girl whom Lucky meets in Tempe, Arizona. Ginny is kind, but very much a feminist, and is at the same time, a hair model. She resents her life, because her parents always force her to do what she doesn't want to do, and they structure her day very strictly. Ginny despises the lack of control she has over her own life, so she smokes cigarettes to rebel. She gives Lucky his first kiss, and cuts off all of her hair to spite her parents and wrest control away from them. Unfortunately, Ginny's mother beats her up over the shaving of her head, and Ginny runs to seek comfort in Lucky's arms.

Nader McMillan

Nader McMillan is the main antagonist in the novel "Everybody Sees the Ants" by A. S. King. He serves as a foil to Lucky, taunting him constantly, and physically beating him



up several times. Nader is mean, spiteful, and vindictive, and takes delight in torturing others. He is protected by a wealthy and influential father. Eventually, Nader is fired from his job as a lifeguard at the pool when enough people -including Lucky's mother- complain. After Nader forces Charlotte to leave the pool topless in order to retrieve her own top, Ronald shows up and beats Nader McMillan up.

Lara Jones

Lara Jones is the sweet and pretty girl who plays cards with Lucky at the pool each summer. She hates Nader like most everyone else, and is thrilled to see Lucky when he returns from Arizona.

Danny

Danny is the sidekick of Nader, and a two-faced friend to Lucky. Danny works at the pool, and appears to turn a blind eye to Nader's constant bullying of Lucky. When Ronald comes looking for Nader, Ronald roughs Danny up in order to find Nader.

Harry Linderman

Harry Linderman is the grandfather of Lucky Linderman, father of Vic, father-in-law of Lori, and husband of Janice. Harry is a soldier who fought in Vietnam, and became a POW/MIA. He is sorely missed and dearly loved by Janice, who spends the rest of her life searching for him. Harry appears in Lucky's dreams throughout the novel, standing in as a sort of father figure to Lucky, and helping him to seek out answers. Among the most noted pieces of advice that Lucky ultimately comes away with from Harry are that Lucky can control his own life, and that he must live in the present, not the past. At the end of the novel, Harry gives Lucky his wedding ring to give to Vic, to let him know that Harry himself has died in the jungles of Vietnam.



Objects/Places

Frederickstown, Pennsylvania

Frederickstown, Pennsylvania, is the home of Lucky Linderman and his family. It is where Lucky lives, attends school, and goes swimming at the Frederickstown Community Swimming Pool. It is also where Lucky faces bullying from Nader.

Frederickstown Community Swimming Pool

Frederickstown Community Swimming Pool is located in Frederickstown, Pennsylvania, and is where Lucky spends most of his summer with his mother, who swims laps. At the pool, Lucky is bullied by Nader, and plays cards and grows close to Lara. It is also where Lucky comes to Charlotte's defense, getting her top for her when she loses it in the pool.

Freddy High

Freddy High is located in Frederickstown, Pennsylvania, and is where Lucky, Nader, Danny, Charlotte, and Lara attend school. It is also where most of the bullying from Nader occurs.

Tempe, Arizona

Tempe, Arizona is where the home of Lori's brother, Dave, and his wife, Jodi, is located. It is where Lucky and Lori visit, and where Lucky begins growing close to his mother and turning his life around. It is also where Lucky meets his Ninja Girl, Ginny.

The Playground

The playground is where Lucky and Ginny often meet and hang out. It is where Ginny kisses Lucky, and is where the shed is located.

The Shed

The shed, used for maintenance, is where Ginny keeps a stash of cigarettes. Following her beating, it is where she and Lucky seek solace, and where Lucky kisses all of her bruises.



Cigarettes

Cigarettes are what Ginny smokes while she is outside of her home. She explains to Lucky that cigarettes are her form of rebellion against her parents and her structured life.

Books

Books are what Lucky reads constantly throughout the novel, most notably "Catch-22" by Joseph Heller. Lucky uses these books to learn more about the Vietnam War and the cultural mindset of the United States at the time.

Weights

Weights, once owned by Jodi, are used by Dave and Lucky to work out. Lucky uses the weights to gain strength and tone his arms.

Harry's Wedding Ring

Harry's wedding ring is given by Harry to his grandson, Lucky, so that Lucky may explain the dreams and Harry's situation to Vic.



Themes

Bullying

Bullying is one of the three overarching themes in A. S. King's novel "Everybody Sees the Ants." It affects not only the course of the plot, but appears consistently throughout the novel, either in physical or emotional ways. It affects every single one of the characters in the novel in different ways.

For Lucky, the protagonist, bullying is a physical and emotional trauma. Physically, Lucky is beaten by and humiliated by Nader several times throughout the novel, but Lucky relates that the bullying has been going on for years. Nader torments Lucky in person whenever he is around, but the pain for Lucky doesn't end with having his face scraped across the sidewalk. Indeed, Lucky carries severe emotional scars from the bullying, thinking about it constantly. It makes him feel smaller, somehow less a person than he is.

For those around Lucky, their responses and attitudes toward bullying vary. For Lucky's father, Vic, bullying is something that Lucky should ignore, because according to his father, fighting is for sissies. For Lucky's mother, bullying is something horrifying and something that needs to be dealt with, but she hesitates to intervene on her son's behalf, mostly because she hopes that Vic will do so in her stead. (At last, at the end of the novel, Lucky's mother does intervene on her son's behalf.) For Dave, who was himself a bully, bullying is a cowardly thing for people to do who are unhappy with themselves. He urges and helps Lucky get in shape so that Lucky can defend himself. For Ginny, and her friends, bullying is something that should never even be tolerated: it is something that should be dealt with by the police, and be done with. In the case of Lucky's grandfather, Harry, past sins like those committed by Nader shouldn't be forgotten, but they should be moved past by Lucky. In so doing, each of the characters around Lucky feel for him, offer him different approaches to handling Nader, and all of them ultimately help Lucky.

Family

Family is one of the three overarching themes in A. S. King's novel "Everybody Sees the Ants". Family appears consistently throughout the book, forming the basis for much of the plot, and spurring things on to the novel's conclusion. Family, with its sense of safety, security, stability, and unconditional love and acceptance, is something sought by Lucky throughout the book, and which he finds only at the end.

At the beginning of the novel, Lucky's family is distant. His mother and his father fight frequently. His mother is devoted to swimming laps, while his father is devoting to his love of cooking. Lucky's father, who has grown up without his own father, has never gotten past his father's disappearance in the Vietnam War. It troubles his own



relationship with Lucky. Indeed, Lucky comes to know his grandfather through his dreams, in ways that his own father never got to know him. Indeed, it is Lucky's grandfather who encourages him to meet his parents halfway (with his mother, swimming; with his father, cooking) and in so doing, seals the sense of family that Lucky is looking for. Lucky comes to appreciate both his mother and his father tremendously by the end of the novel.

Yet, besides Harry, Lucky's ascent to finding family would not have been complete without the inclusion of Uncle Dave and Aunt Jodi. Dave provides Lucky with someone he can talk to, someone he can relate to, someone he can trust. Indeed, Lucky wonders what it would be like to trade his father for Dave. Even Aunt Jodi, who seems addicted to a variety of pills and odd theories (such as feng shui) makes a mark on Lucky, in the sense that she forces him to see people in a different light, beyond their mere appearances. This in turn translates back into helping Lucky see past the exteriors of both of his own parents: For example, Lucky's father is no longer cold and distant, but unsure and hesitant, having grown up fatherless.

Coming of Age

Coming of age is one of the three overarching themes in A. S. King's novel "Everybody Sees the Ants". Coming of age involves the growth of a character, in terms of understanding, self-awareness, morality, and other quality aspects. Coming of age pertains specifically to Lucky in the novel.

When the novel begins, Lucky is a disinterested sort of kid, who gets good grades, but barely manages to get by. He is not confident with girls, he is easily discouraged and depressed, considers suicide, and has to deal with daily bullying from Nader. To Lucky, it appears as if everything is out of his hands, and he is simply a victim of circumstances beyond his control. In the attempt to improve things between herself and her husband, and also for her son, Lori brings Lucky to the home of her brother Dave, and her sister-in-law, Jodi, in Arizona.

While in Arizona, Lucky befriends and shares his first kiss with an older girl named Ginny, who herself has to deal with the overwhelming expectations of her parents. Lucky also grows close to his Uncle Dave and Aunt Jodi, and grows even closer to his mother. Each one of them, in one way or another, helps Lucky to better understand himself, and to better understand his own purpose in life. His grandfather especially helps him with that, leading Lucky to understand that his life is his own choosing. By the end of the novel, Lucky is much more confident, courageous, close to his family, and he values life and friendship. He retains his strong moral sense, but nevertheless stands up to Nader and is determined to make Lara Jones his girlfriend.

Style

Point of View

A. S. King tells her novel "Everybody Sees the Ants" in the first-person perspective of Lucky Linderman, the protagonist for at least two major reasons.

The first reason is that the novel is about Lucky and his dealing with bullies and a difficult family position. It is through Lucky's eyes that events unfold, from Nader's bullying to Lucky's dreams of his grandfather to Vic's distance. Because of this -that the novel deals with events around Lucky's life- it is only fitting that his story should be told from his perspective.

The second reason is that it is better for one character to relate, in personal terms, his or her own personal experiences the emotionally-charged themes that the book deals with, ranging from bullying to family to coming of age, This allows the reader to relate directly to the character, feeling, seeing, and understanding things exactly as the character feels, sees, and understands them, without the intervention or invasion of a narrator.

Setting

The setting of A. S. King's novel "Everybody Sees the Ants" is that of Pennsylvania and Arizona. The United States has long been associated with second chances and self-discovery, and the American West is especially known for such chances. Lucky journeys to Arizona to stay with relatives to escape, to get away from it all, but in the process, true to form for the American West being a place for second chances and self-discovery, Lucky becomes a stronger, resilient, and self-assured young man. Having found himself in the west, Lucky returns east.

Language and Meaning

Because A. S. King's novel "Everybody Sees the Ants" is told from the perspective of its fifteen year old protagonist, Lucky, King uses language that is fitting to Lucky's character. She employs vocabulary, thought patterns, and prose that is not overburdened with poetry, arcane or esoteric knowledge, or complicated language. Because of this, the characterization of Lucky is much more believable, and makes the story King tells that much more convincing -and readable. This also makes the pace of the plot quick and engaging, not drawn out and overdone.

Structure

A. S. King divides her novel "Everybody Sees the Ants" into three parts and thirty-four chronological chapters. Because the novel revolves around a fifteen year-old teenager, and the plot of the novel is straightforward, King doesn't burden the reader with unnecessary and complicated chapter structures. Rather, the chronological chapters help propel the reader forward through the plot, making the plot of the novel paramount and easily accessible to readers. This in turn allows the reader to focus on the plot, not on the structure.



Quotes

"All I want to do is run away. I just want to start over. I do not want to explain this to Dad. i feel like a failure. A loser" (Chapter 8, p. 55).

"Already I feel something good coming from this. I find myself wondering what it would be like if I could trade Dad for Dave" (Chapter 13, p. 93).

"I guess it was hard for him to look at the logic behind the draft lotteries, because that same logic had taken away his father. And, anyway, what's so logical about the day you were born deciding when you might die" ((Chapter 16, p. 117).

"Mom says that Nader is a loser who will grow up to be a loser and that I'll understand that when I'm forty. But I want to understand now" (Chapter 17, p. 130).

"Aren't we all bleeding a little" (Chapter 18, p. 151).

"It might have seemed a good solution. A way out. But something is different now. The world is bigger or something. My life is bigger" (Chapter 20, p. 161).

"I don't even use the stupid shampoo" (Chapter 27, p. 219).

"When he folds that POW/MIA flag every night, that's his father he's holding. It's all he's got. It's all he's ever had" (Chapter 29, p. 231).

"New skin amazes me. New skin is a miracle. It is proof that we can heal" (Chapter 29, p. 243).

"I need you to tell your father that everything is over now. I need you to tell him that I loved him more than I ever loved anything in my life" (Chapter 33, p. 277).



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the theme of bullying in the novel "Everybody Sees the Ants" by A. S. King. How is Lucky bullied and by whom? How do those around Lucky attempt to help him handle bullying? In the end, what is Lucky's solution?

What is the importance of the title of the book, "Everybody Sees the Ants", and how does it relate to Lucky? To people in general?

Discuss the theme of family in the novel "Everybody Sees the Ants" by A. S. King. In what ways does family appear in the novel? How does it help Lucky to grow? How does Lucky's own relationship with his family change over time?

Why do you think that Lucky's grandfather, Harry, decided to appear to Lucky in his dreams, rather than his son, Vic's dreams? What purpose could this have served? What do you think would have been the result had Harry appeared to Vic in his dreams rather than Lucky's?

Discuss the theme of coming of age in the novel "Everybody Sees the Ants" by A. S. King. What is Lucky Linderman like at the beginning of the novel? What are his character traits? How do these change by the end of the novel, and why? What are the results of his growth as a person? What effects might this growth have?