

Fat Kid Rules the World Study Guide

Fat Kid Rules the World by KL Going

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Plot Summary

"Fat Kid Rules the World" by K. L. Going tells the story of a 17-year-old boy named Troy who is pushing 300 pounds. He has serious issues with his image and the book begins with Troy standing on the edge of the subway platform, contemplating suicide. He is distracted by an emaciated young man who is a popular, talented musician named Curt. They form a friendship that transforms each of them in unique ways.

Curt decides that Troy should be the drummer in his new band, Rage/Tectonic. This sounds great to Troy until he really focuses on the fact that he hasn't played drums since junior high school, and he didn't play that much then. He likes the idea of being on stage, but the reality of it terrifies him. Curt tells him not to worry about it and arranges a gig five weeks in the future. He also arranges for Troy received some drum lessons.

They meet together to practice with Troy cutting classes. He gains new respect from some of the students in the school due to his Curt connection. As he gets to know Curt, he realizes that his friend is addicted to prescription drugs. Curt also doesn't really have a place to live because he can't stand his stepfather. Curt is always sleeping in odd places, and he is always hungry, eating food obsessively when he gets his hands on it.

Curt make a deal with a friend so Troy can have his first drum lesson with Ollie, but Troy panics. He feels like a complete failure. His brother scoffs at him, but his father shows support. He warns his son to be careful with Curt because Curt displays all the symptoms of a junkie. However, he seems to understand that Curt is the key to Troy's healing. Troy turned to food for comfort after his mother died when he was younger, and he hit a point where he didn't go out much or have any friends. Now, with Curt in the picture, Troy is inspired to go out and try new things again.

Even after he has decided not to become a drummer for Curt, Troy goes to a show after Curt invites him. Troy gets a firsthand look at what happens backstage. When the show begins, he is taken up by the energy and is enthralled by the energy and raw power of the music. He wants to become part of it.

Over the next few weeks, Troy works very hard at his drumming. When it comes time for his first day playing in a gig, he is so nervous that he throws up on stage. Horrified, he decides to quit and hibernate in his home. He turns to food for comfort. Days later, Ollie calls and asks him to get in touch with Curt because Curt feels as if Troy has abandoned him.

Curt isn't doing well and when he and Troy are talking together, he collapses. Troy takes him to the hospital where they find out that Curt has a bad case of pneumonia. The hospital is a haven for Curt, who has no reason to leave since he has nowhere to go. Troy sacrifices his future with the band to show Curt was a real friend is. As the story finishes, the two are on stage, both transformed and ready to take on the world through music.



Chapters 1-14

Chapters 1-14 Summary

"Fat Kid Rules the World" by K. L. Going tells the story of a 17-year-old boy named Troy who is pushing 300 pounds. He has serious issues with his image, and the book begins with Troy standing on the edge of the subway platform, contemplating suicide. He is distracted by an emaciated young man who is a popular, talented musician named Curt. They form a friendship that transforms each of them in unique ways.

In Chapter 1, a sweating, 296-pound 17-year-old who is over 6 feet tall, stands at the edge of the subway platform, contemplating suicide. He wonders if people are going to laugh as he jumps. The boy reflects on the fact that people always laugh at fat people, and it bothers him to think that people might laugh after he dies. He doesn't want them to laugh at his death so he can't decide if he really should go through with the suicide or not. He hears the rumble of the train and imagines what would happen if he were hit. He sees his own fat bursting all over the place, and he sees humor in the situation so he starts laughing.

In Chapter 2, he hears a voice asking if he is laughing at the other person. At first he can't see who it is, but soon he notices a dirty, skinny person next to him. The kid gets up and introduces himself as Curt McCrae. Troy, the fat boy, can't believe that Curt is really talking with him because he recognizes the name and knows that Curt is considered a legend at his school. He is an incredibly talented guitar player who lives in a homeless state. Curt tells him that he saved Troy's life so Troy owes him a lunch. They head off together.

In Chapter 3, the two boys head to a diner with the fat boy trying to keep up with skinny one. Curt can't seem to think about anything except for the food. Troy is having a hard time concentrating at the diner because he is attracted to the waitress who is old enough to be his mother. When the food comes, everyone in the diner is shocked at the way Curt eats. He is obsessed with the food. Troy, the fat boy, is so amazed, watching his new friend, that he forgets to eat.

In Chapter 4, Curt talks about how he saved Troy's life, telling him that he was lucky he was at the station. Troy tells him that he was just thinking about jumping, and he wasn't actually going to do it. Curt feels sick and leaves Troy alone in the booth.

In Chapter 5, Troy is certain his new friend is shooting up drugs in the bathroom. He doesn't understand how he got in this situation, and he considers leaving. Curt comes back in and tells Troy to order more food and eat until he feels better. Troy agrees. He watches as Curt takes out some medication. Curt reassures him that it's all prescription pharmaceutical.



In Chapter 6, the two young men talk and Curt realizes that Troy goes to the same school that he once attended. Curt comments on the fact that he enjoyed going to school. Troy asks Curt where he lives, and Curt tells him that he lives in several different places. His mother married a man he doesn't appreciate, so he doesn't like to stay with her. Sometimes he stays with his band. Troy says that he has heard of Curt's band and loves the music. Curt gives Troy the nickname, Big T.

In Chapter 7, Troy eats for over an hour and Curt goes into the bathroom several times. The waitress is worried about him. She asks if Curt needs a doctor. Troy said he just needs to eat better, and she says that he can come and eat at the diner any time.

In Chapter 8, Troy tries to hail a taxi cab to get home, and he has difficulty. Curt stays with him, and they begin to discuss music. Troy tells Curt that he used to play drums when he was in junior high school. Curt comes home with him, and they meet up with his brother and his father. His father is upset that Troy is home late and asks where he has been. Curt mentions that they've been at band practice. He tells the father that they are starting a band. Dad tells Curt to come inside and take a shower. The skinny boy seems extremely happy. Dayle looks at Curt and Troy as if they are extreme losers, and Troy tries to point out that Curt is a great musician.

In Chapter 9, Troy can't believe what he has done. He really doesn't know how to play the drums at all. He also doesn't believe that Curt really wants to be his friend.

In Chapter 10, Curt is in the shower for a long time, and when he comes out Troy can't believe what he looks like. He's so skinny he is almost concave.

In Chapter 11, Curt has a plan and he shares it with Troy. He is determined to make Troy a drummer in a real band. They set up times to practice, even though Troy has to skip school.

In Chapter 12, when Troy wakes up the next morning, he thinks that he has dreamed the entire scene from the night before.

In Chapter 13, when Troy gets to school the next day, he follows his normal routine in which he struggles to walk into the school while everyone laughs at him. He sees Curt standing by his locker, surrounded by a group of kids. Curt greets him, and Troy tells himself not to screw up. Curt asks if he is ready to practice during second period, and Troy notices that nobody is laughing at him for the first time since fourth grade.

In Chapter 14, Troy waits for Curt at the designated meeting place, but Curt doesn't show up. He's humiliated, feeling as if he is getting stood up, then Curt appears. Curt takes him into a horrible neighborhood and Troy realizes that this is where he lives.

Chapters 1-14 Analysis

In Chapter 1 the reader is introduced to Troy. It's obvious that he has serious issues with self-esteem. He is tall and fat and has no sense of style. He's standing in the subway



station contemplating suicide, and one reason he opts out of it is because he doesn't want people laughing at him.

Troy meets Curt in Chapter 2. Curt is the complete opposite of Troy. He is small, emaciated, and is extremely popular at the school. He is also very bold and makes Troy take him out to eat.

In Chapter 3, at the diner, the waitress tries to sit the boys away from everybody else. Curt is extremely dirty, and Troy is huge. She doesn't protest when they choose their own table. Troy finds himself attracted to the waitress even though she's old enough to be his mother. This shows he is an average teen male. For him, the waitress is sensual, but for Curt, the food is. He seems transported to another world while he is eating, and it makes everyone stare him. Troy is so amazed at the sight, that he, himself, forgets to eat. As his size shows, this is very uncommon.

In Chapter 4, Curt insists that he saved Troy's life. Troy tries to protest, but Curt can't stand around to listen because he has to go to the bathroom. He says he is sick, but Troy thinks he is shooting up drugs.

In Chapter 5, Troy realizes that his new friend might be a drug addict. He is an escapist. He doesn't have friends, and now he wants to escape the situation by leaving, but Curt comes back. Curt insist that he isn't a druggie. The pills that he takes our prescription drugs.

In Chapter 6, Troy definitely has the weaker personality of the two. He wants to leave and he knows that he is past curfew, but he does whatever Curt tells him to do. They talk about a music group, and Troy shows some personality. He loves punk rock music, but it doesn't show in his appearance or anything else. In fact, he literally hides his passion in a drawer. Curt calls Troy by a nickname, Big T. This means so much to Troy that he is willing to follow Curt anywhere.

In Chapter 7, Troy isn't the only person who notices that Curt has a problem. The waitress questions Troy about his friend the next time Curt is in the bathroom. She asks if he needs to see a doctor. Troy defends Curt as if he has known him for ages.

In Chapter 8, Troy still doesn't stand up for himself. He is arriving home late, and Curt is inviting himself over. In this chapter, the reader meets Troy's father and brother. The father is solid, firm, and kind. His brother is younger than he is, but he is everything that Troy is not. He is slender, athletic, and he has a determined attitude. He looks down on Troy. When Dayle meets Curt, he is disgusted. Troy can't believe that he is treating Curt like that. He realizes that Dayle doesn't realize how popular Curt really is.

In Chapter 9, Troy so happy about the new friendship that he agrees to become a drummer in a band even though he doesn't know how to play the drums. After committing, he tries to think of a way out of the situation.

In Chapter 10, Curt comes out of the bathroom, and Troy chance to really look at him. He is way too skinny. Troy's father insists that he eat something.



In Chapter 11, Troy has great respect for his father, obeying him without protest. Curt is different and has no problem doing his own thing. He drags his clothes out of the garbage. He and Troy talk about a practice schedule, and it's very clear that Curt does not have any respect for the school system since their schedule dictates that Troy skip out of his classes. Curt asks Troy if he has any cough medicine. After showing the prescription medication at the restaurant, asking for cough medicine is another clue that Curt might have a problem.

In Chapter 12, Troy is so unused to people wanting to be around him that he persuades himself that everything he did with Curt was in illusion.

In Chapter 13, Troy goes to school and simple things like getting out of the car and walking are difficult for him because of his size. He is certain that everybody is laughing at him. Curt is at his locker, and Troy is blown away. He realizes that Curt is still extremely popular, and he really is not an illusion. In a bold move, he publicly agrees to meet with Curt to practice. This is the first step to a new persona.

Chapter 14 - Up until this point in the book it appears as if Curt has a decent life. He has chosen to live alone. He is confident, and he is popular. Now Troy sees where he is coming from, and he realizes that his new friend doesn't have the best life.



Chapters 15-28

Chapters 15-28 Summary

In Chapter 15, the apartment Curt's mother lives in is very small. Curt helps himself to some medication, and he points out that it's all right because it's prescription. He tells Troy that they have a gig in five weeks. Troy is terrified.

In Chapter 16, Troy realizes that he has to tell Curt that he is not really a drummer. They talk about music and what groups they like best. Together, they listen to music. Troy finds out that Curt grew up listening to the Beatles, and his mother taught him to really enjoy music.

In Chapter 17, they listen to music all afternoon. Curt grabs his guitar and begins to play. Troy is amazed at his performance. He wants to be part of the music, and he realizes he's having a good time with Curt.

In Chapter 18, suddenly, the two boys realize how late it is. Curt panics and scurries around to get out of there. He gives Troy some CDs to listen to and runs out the back door. Troy can't get through the door because he is too fat, and Curt leaves him standing alone. He makes it outside without anyone coming in, but as he leaves, a man comments on his weight.

In Chapter 19, Troy realizes that he should be upset at Curt for bailing on him, but instead, he feels happy. When he gets home, his brother interrogates him. Dayle points out that he missed the whole day of school, and he can tell their father. He tries to put Troy down for hanging out with the psycho guitar player, but instead, it makes Troy feel happy. He doesn't care what his brother thinks.

In Chapter 20, on Thursday, a girl speaks to Troy on purpose for the first time. She wants to know if he really is friends with Curt, and she tells him that she is really into Curt's band.

In Chapter 21, the next time Troy sees Curt, it happens by accident. He is coming home from the dentist, remembering when he used to take his brother to the dentist when they were younger. His mother was dying, and his father had to spend his time in the hospital so it was up to Troy to take care of his brother. Back in those days, they were buddies. As he is walking through the subway tunnels, he hears an amazing voice and a guitar. He realizes that Curt is singing for an audience. The audience is mesmerized, but Curt stops playing for them as soon as he sees Troy. He begins talking about Curt playing the drums. Troy tries to tell him once again that he really can't play the drums, but Curt won't listen to him.

In Chapter 22, they go back to Troy's apartment, and Curt comes inside. Curt looks at his room and encourages him to decorate the room while he sleeps.



In Chapter 23, as Curtis sleeps, Troy tries to figure out how to decorate his room. He doesn't have anything to decorate with except for an old Saturday Night Live poster. When Curt wakes up, he approves. He puts on a CD, and while the music plays, he decorates the room himself. He leaves a spot for a drum set. As he is leaving, Troy's father and brother pass him in the hallway. Dayle asks their father to tell Curt to stay away. His father asks Troy if he is aware that his friend is a junkie.

In Chapter 24, on Monday, Troy waits for Curt to show up at school, but he doesn't appear. Wondering what's wrong, Troy goes to Curt's home, but the boy isn't there either. Instead, he meets Curt's stepfather, who is a very nasty man.

In Chapter 25, Troy goes back to school and finds Curt waiting at his locker. When he tells Curt what happened that morning, Curt tells him that Troy could have beaten up his stepfather.

In Chapter 26, when they go to the subway station, Curt uses Troy's size as a block so he can get through the turnstile without paying.

In Chapter 27, Troy realizes that although he thinks people are always looking at him and laughing at him, in reality they don't see him at all.

In Chapter, 28, the world feels very different to Troy, and he follows Curt to a place called The Dump. There is a stage in the room and numerous instruments. Troy is excited, but all Curt is thinking about is food. He asks for money, and Troy hands some over. Curt leaves to grab some food, telling Troy that he will bring some back for him.

Chapters 15-28 Analysis

In Chapter 15, the horrible environment in Curt's mother's home isn't enough to keep him back from the wonders of music and the draw of his guitar. However, before he heads to the music, he goes to the bathroom and grab some pills. Once again, they are prescription. This shows his medication addiction might be even more powerful than his music.

In Chapter 16, Troy can't believe that Curt really wants to be with him, and he is certain he has to tell his new friend that he really can't play the drum. This shows his honesty. However, he gets distracted as they begin to talk more about music. Troy learns that Curt learned to love music by listening to classic groups.

In Chapter 17, they spend the day listening to music, and the circumstances begin to transform Troy. He makes a conscious decision to try to loosen up a bit.

In Chapter 18, when they realize how late it is, Curt panics. As he runs out the back door, the reader is left with some serious realizations. Curt is willing to sacrifice his friend in order to save himself, and Troy is so large, he can't get out the door the way a normal person will. This latter realization is made even more poignant as the woman and the drunk converse. The woman tells the man to lay off the booze because there is



no such thing of a 300 pound kid. Since the writing is in first person, and the reader is now very acquainted with Troy and his situation, it feels like a personal attack.

In Chapter 19, Troy is well aware of the fact that he should be hurt and that he should be feeling betrayed by the fact that Curt left him. Instead, he is thrilled. It was a fantastic day.

Chapter 20 - Troy knew that being friends with Curt would lead to good things, and it's beginning to show. A girl talks to him for the first time in a long time.

Chapter 21 - The next time Troy sees Curt, he is playing music, and he is surrounded by a crowd. Even in the subway station, his music reaches out and grabs people. It's one way he earns money, but he doesn't care about that and stops his show to join his friend as soon as he sees Troy.

Chapter 22 - Curt once again invites himself over to Troy's house. He wants to get some decent sleep, but he also helps Troy inadvertently by pointing out that he needs to get some style. He doesn't come across as judgmental, but he points out to Troy that individuals make their own size and their own walls. It's not about what other people think.

In Chapter 23, Troy has no idea how to decorate his room. He only has one poster, which is interesting because in the previous chapter the author writes that he had a stash of paraphernalia from a punk rock group. Even though he doesn't have the imagination to decorate, Curt does. He leaves a section of the room empty for a drum set, showing that he is determined to have Troy become a drum player in his band. After Curt leaves, Troy's father shows that he is watching and expresses concern about Curt because Curt shows the classic symptoms of a junkie.

In Chapter 24, Troy is stood up. Instead of accepting it and going back to class he proactively goes out to find his friend. He meets Curt's stepfather and understands why Curt doesn't want to live there anymore.

In Chapter 25, Curt is at his locker when he gets back to school. The morning has been an emotional stressor for Troy, and he loses it. He insists that he can't play the drums and loses his temper. This doesn't faze Curt at all. He helps turn Troy mood around and makes Troy feel as if he is a better person.

In Chapter 26, they go to the subway station, and Curt uses Troy's size to get out of paying for a train ticket. He points out that it's ironic that people are so busy trying to pretend that they are not looking at Troy that they really aren't looking at him. The thought really jolts Troy.

In Chapter 27, Troy's whole world is rocked by Curt's observation. His own perception on how others see him might be completely wrong.

In Chapter 28, the realization that people aren't always looking at him and laughing at him makes Troy feel like a whole new person. Curt, ever on the hunt for food, gets some money from Troy and leaves him at The Dump as he goes off to get food.



Summary and Analysis For Chapters 29-42

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 29-42 Summary

In Chapter 29, hours later, Troy is still standing there in the studio, and Curt hasn't shown up again. He is very hungry. In fact, he is about to leave when another guy comes in. It's Ollie Oliver from the Smack Metal Puppets. He says he is looking for Curt, and Troy tells him that the other boy has gone out for food. Ollie says that he is supposed to meet someone there for a drum lesson. Troy says that he is the one who is supposed to take the lesson, and he tells Ollie that hasn't played since junior high. Ollie tells him that he is going to have to work hard, but it is doable. He can be ready to play within five weeks. Ollie starts with a basic lesson, and Curt eventually slinks in. He doesn't bring any extra food with him.

In Chapter 30, Troy doesn't understand what is going on. He tells the others that he has to go home and that he won't be playing in the gig. He doesn't want to play in front of people. The others tell him that's all right. Ollie reminds Curt that he has to play in a gig on Saturday night to pay for the lesson. Ollie tells Troy that if he changes his mind he can come back, but Troy says that he won't. As he leaves, he realizes that he isn't sure about that statement. Suddenly he doesn't want to leave.

In Chapter 31, by the time he gets home, Troy realizes that he has made a huge mistake. Things are bad at home. The school called, and his father found out that he had skipped classes. When his father asks him about it, he tells the whole story. Troy also tells his father that he has quit. He says it won't happen again, and his father tells him to make sure that it doesn't.

In Chapter 32, the next day is a horrible day at school. Troy trips at lunch and falls into his lunch tray. He spends part of the day in the psychologist's office. However, when he gets home, he finds his father setting up a drum set. When he mentions that he thought his father didn't want him playing the drums, his father admits that maybe he was wrong.

In Chapter 33, Troy wants to find Curt, but he can't find him anywhere. He realizes that although many people know Curt, nobody knows how to find him.

In Chapter 34, just when he's about to give up on finding Curt, Curt finds Troy. It's Saturday night, and the phone rings. Troy doesn't even bother answering the phone because nobody ever calls him. However, when his father answers, he finds out that the phone call is for him, and it is Curt. Curt tells him that he is on his way to come pick Troy up to take him to the concert Curt is playing in.



In Chapter 35, Troy's father can't believe that he agreed to go to the concert. Troy can't believe it either, and he tells his father that he won't really go. In fact, he is looking for a way out. His father seems to change his mind and tells him that he should go to the concert. He knows Troy's a smart kid and will call if there is a problem. Dayle comes in wondering if Troy is really going to go to the gig, and Troy tells him that he is not.

In Chapter 36, Troy hears the doorbell rang, but he doesn't plan to go to the gig. However, Curt comes in and helps them find something to wear and tells him to hurry up since the guys are waiting downstairs.

In Chapter 37, when they get into the living room, Troy's father is questioning Curt's friends. He tells them not to do any drugs and to avoid drinking. His father tells him to have a good time at the concert.

In Chapter 38, Troy panics when they leave the house. He's distracted as Leon and Piper fight with each other. Curt introduces them all to each other.

In Chapter 39, Troy is beginning to feel ill when they arrive at The Dump. They push through the crowd and head backstage. Curt passes around a bottle of Jack Daniels, and Troy drinks some.

In Chapter 40, the Dump looks completely different from the first time Troy visited. People are packed in, and music is blaring. Curt encourages Troy to use his size as a block to pass through the crowds. He seems to take on a new persona amidst all the people. Curt introduces him to everyone as his new drummer, then admits that Troy can't play anything.

In Chapter 41, Ollie comes over to talk with Troy and asks if everything is back on track. Troy admits that he has never been to a show, and a woman comes in and announces that it is five minutes until they are going to be on stage. Ollie tells him to go down front, stage right. Troy finds a spot two feet away from the stage. Someone bumps into him, and when he looks at the other guy, he notices that the other guy is wary of him. He feels out of place and wants to get out because there is too much energy. As he thinks about turning around and leaving, the room goes black, and the noise increases.

In Chapter 42, the first thing Troy hears this the sound of the drums. The crowd begins to pulse with the energy, and the lights make the stage look like hell. He's blown away by the performance, and gets caught up in the vibe.

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 29-42 Analysis

In Chapter 29, Troy is feeling completely abandoned by the time Ollie comes in. When Ollie finds out that Troy is supposed to learn how to play the drums and has never really played, he is annoyed at Curt, but seems to take it as par for the course. He has good work ethic and holds true to his word by teaching Troy how to play the drums even though it seems dismal. He even gives Troy some encouragement, telling him that five weeks is a fine amount of time for Troy to learn how to play drums as a backup for Curt.



In Chapter 30, even though the other two are very encouraging, Troy knows that he is horrible at the drums, and he feels discouraged. He tells them he's not going to do it, and they don't try to persuade him. They leave it up to him to make his own decisions. Curt shows that he has just as much positive work ethic as Ollie when he agrees to play in a gig as payment for the drum lesson, even though Troy doesn't plan to continue playing.

Chapter 31 clearly demonstrates the positive relationship between Troy and his father. Troy obviously feels close enough to his father to reveal the truth about what he has been up to. His father listens, and he is firm. Instead of lashing out at Troy, he wonders where he went wrong as a father. Still, he does warn Troy to make sure that it never happens again.

In Chapter 32, things have been going well since he met Curt, but now Troy's life seems to be going worse than ever. His father seems to realize it, and he verbally admits that he might have been wrong.

In Chapter 33, Curt is extremely popular, but in this chapter, the reader becomes aware that while the boy is popular, no one really knows him.

In Chapter 34, Curt hasn't forgotten about Troy. He seems to accept the fact that Troy doesn't want to be a drummer, but he still wants Troy to be part of the music scene.

In Chapter 35, Troy can't believe he agreed to go to a concert, and he tries to think of ways to back out. At first his father wants to protect his son by not letting him go, but he seems to realize that his son is growing up, and this is a big step towards independence. His father encourages him to leave and go to the concert.

In Chapter 36, as Curt comes in and helps Troy get ready, he says that is going to be an important event in the history Rage/Techtonic. This shows that maybe he hasn't given up on having Troy as his drummer after all.

In Chapter 37, Troy's father doesn't let go of his role. He might be letting his son go out and assert his independence, but he's going to make certain that he does it in a safe manner. He warns them all not to do drugs and not to drink.

In Chapter 38, as they leave, Troy expects his new friends to make fun of his father, but instead, they have respect for him.

In Chapter 39, by the time they get to the concert, Troy is feeling a bit ill. His illness when nervous foreshadows problems in the future. It leaves the reader wondering what's going to happen if he is the one performing. At this point, he is merely a spectator. Even though his father warns him not to, Troy drinks. It doesn't take much for his new friends to persuade him.

In Chapter 40, it is Troy's first time at a concert, and he gets to see behind the scenes. He sees the transformation of the band and of the stage in the studio where he had his



drum lesson. Curt introduces Troy to everyone as his new drummer, showing that Curt didn't really accept Troy's resignation after all.

In Chapter 41, Troy is overwhelmed with all that is happening to him. He actually has a relationship with the band. When he goes out front, the energy is overwhelming, and he feels as if he can't handle it. He strongly considers leaving.

In Chapter 42, the music explodes around him and the lights comes up. Troy is blown away by what's happening on stage and by what's happening in the crowd around him. When he spent the afternoon with Curt in his mother's apartment, he made a conscious decision to let loose, but up to this point he hasn't been able to. Now he instinctively lets everything out, pounding his fist in the air and hollering, making his voice heard. This is a symbolic release of his old life, as he embraces a new one.



Summary and Analysis For Chapters 43-57

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 43-57 Summary

In Chapter 43, as the music surrounds him, Troy realizes that nobody is looking at him. Not only is he not an outcast, but he is one of the elite. He is the guy who knows the band. He moves his body and enjoys letting himself loose. The energy in the place is amazing, and the band builds the energy one song after another. Troy thinks it can't get any better, then they introduce Curt. The guitar wails, and a Curt Troy is not familiar with plays on stage. He pulses with energy, and the crowd feeds off of him. He plays with a raw emotion that speaks to the crowd. Troy feels as if Curt is singing about Troy's own life.

In Chapter 44, when Curt leaves the stage, the show is over. Troy goes to wait for Curt, and some girls hit on him, recognizing that he is Curt's friend. Ollie tells him that Curt is gone.

In Chapter 45, the girls leave and everyone is going home. It's 3:45 AM, and Troy knows he should be upset at Curt for leaving him, but instead, he is grinning. It's the best night of his life. He heads home with Ollie and can't stop talking about the concert. Ollie points out that he thinks Troy will make a decent drummer for Curt. He needs somebody who is solid. Troy says he thinks he's going to do it.

In Chapter 46, Troy realizes that he would make a good drummer for Curt. He thinks about the concert and realizes that someday people might be screaming as they hear him play.

In Chapters 47, Troy wakes up around noon the next day, and he is starving. His brother talks to him, trying to find out how the evening went. Dayle gets on his case for coming home so late, and Troy reminds him that he is a senior now. Dayle doesn't believe he really went to the club.

In Chapter 48, Curt calls at 6:45 AM on Monday morning. He asks if Troy wants to meet at his house that day. Troy says he would like to meet him, but he won't skip classes any longer. They agree to wait until after school.

In Chapter 49, although they are supposed to meet at 4:45 PM, Troy gets home at 4:20 PM, and Curt is already waiting. Curt is acting erratic and hyper. He can't get through a song without stopping. Although he is supposed to be teaching Troy music, he won't sing any lyrics, and he is leaving out chunks of the music. Dad comes home and insists that Curt stay for dinner. Curt can't keep still. Curt doesn't seem to know how to act at the dinner table. Dad converses with him, asking if he has a job. Curt says that he does occasionally, but he loses most of his jobs because he gets fired. When Dad asks him



why he gets fired, he says it's because he steals stuff and sleeps when he is not supposed to. This honesty throws everyone off guard and Dad inquires why he does that. Curt tells him it's because he is hungry and tired.

In Chapter 50, Dayle is very impressed, but he tries to pretend that he isn't. Even though Troy is supposed to do the dishes, Dad has Curt do it, telling him that Troy will do the dishes over the weekend. Right then, the guys had to practice.

In Chapter 51, they practice in Troy's bedroom, then Curt says he has to go. Troy tells him that he is serious about becoming Curt's drummer.

In Chapter 52, Troy is very serious about practicing the drums. He practices with Curt and on his own. He even reads books about playing the drums.

In Chapter 53, Troy practices for two weeks before Curt plugs in his guitar and tells Troy to keep up. He can't do it. Curt is goofing with him, and when Troy realizes that, he goofs back. They play with the music, laughing. Troy wants to thank Curt for the gift he's giving him with the music and invites him to dinner.

In Chapter 54, Troy is really looking forward to hanging out with Curt again. He is supposed to have another drum lesson with Ollie, and Curt is supposed to meet him there. When he gets to the stage, Curt isn't there Ollie tells him that Curt is out of town. The lesson goes all right, but it isn't great because Troy is preoccupied. He wants to know when Curtis coming back.

In Chapter 55, when Curt comes back on Monday afternoon, he is very grumpy. When they practice, everything goes wrong, and Curt is angry.

In Chapter 56, Curt comes back on Wednesday, but this time he is extremely grumpy and angry. They have a miserable practice and Curt asks for pain killers or cough medicine after the practice. It's all he cares about. He won't even accept food.

In Chapter 57, Curt shows up at Troy's locker on Thursday. He is doing better. They have lunch together, and Curt apologizes for being so grumpy.

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 43-57 Analysis

In Chapter 43, Troy has always been an outsider, but now he is a participant. His size doesn't seem to bother anyone. Curt seems to have transformed as well. He's a new person on stage, tapping into the essential emotions in everyone in the crowd. Troy completely relates to him and is filled with pride over the fact that he has been chosen as Curt's drummer.

By Chapter 44, Troy feels connected with the band and with Curt, but now he's abandoned once again. He begins to see some of the benefits being in a band brings as girls cling to him, trying to get close to Curt.



In Chapter 45, Troy knows that he should feel upset at Curt for ditching him, but instead, he only feels happy. The night was incredible. Ollie brings him home and mentions that Troy will be good for Curt. This is a new concept for Troy who has only seen himself as a loser. He has been grateful for Curt's friendship. The idea that he can actually help the popular young man is a shock at first, but he realizes that Ollie is right. He can help his new friend.

Chapter 46 is a pivotal chapter even though it is short. In this chapter, Troy realizes that he is capable of change. He can be a drummer and while he's taking a risk and the crowd might laugh at him, he also realizes that maybe they would love him.

In Chapter 47, the roles between the brothers reverse. Younger Dayle treats his older brother with scorn and doesn't care about his life while Troy always wishes he were more likely to his younger brother. Now, Dayle wants to hear about Troy and his evening. He doesn't even believe that Troy went to the club. He is beginning to look at his older brother with respect.

In Chapter 48, Curt might have abandoned Troy the night before, but he hasn't forgotten him. He calls and makes plans for practice. Troy demonstrates character change as he stands up to Curt and says he will practice, but he refuses to skip any school for it. Curt is willing to work with that.

In Chapter 49, Curt is showing clear signs that he isn't in control of himself. He can't sit, and his behavior is erratic. He responds well to Dad, the father figure, and is very honest, startling everyone when he is blunt about his tendency to sleep too much and his tendency to steal. He has a good reason for his actions. He is tired, and he's hungry. Toward the beginning of the book, Troy's father warned Troy about his drug addict friend. Now, stunned by the young man's honesty, he stays silent and passes food to Curt.

In Chapter 50, Dayle recognizes that his brother really is doing something and has a true connection with Curt. His older brother is getting a life.

In Chapter 51, Curt and Troy are practicing together, and Troy tries explaining why he was waffling about drumming. Curt seems confused and is more focused about when he has to leave.

In Chapter 52, Troy shows that he is truly dedicated to his commitment and decision to be a drum player. He is so obsessed with his practicing that he doesn't even take time to snack.

Chapter 53 - Troy practices for two weeks before Curt challenges him musically. They have a wonderful practice with the music and seem to really connect. Troy is filled with pride.

In Chapter 54, it seems that every time Troy makes a real connection with Curt, he is let down and abandoned. This happened at Curt's mother's house, at the concert, and now it happens once again as Troy shows up for practice with Ollie only to find out that his



friend who is supposed to be there with him is now out of town. Troy's mind is not on the lesson. He is too concentrated on trying to figure out when Curt is coming back.

In Chapter 55, Curt is back and demonstrating some serious mood swings. He is in a depressed funk and won't really communicate with Troy.

In Chapter 56, on Wednesday, Curt is still in a terrible mood. Now it's even worse. He's so obsessed with finding painkillers or cough medicine that he doesn't even want to eat, which is very unusual for the skinny boy who is always desperate for food. His addiction is taking over.

In Chapter 57, the funk Curt is in is over. Now that he's in a good mood, and he eats with Troy at school. Things seem fine except for the fact that he doesn't remember what he said even before lunch. It doesn't seem to bother him too much. He just goes with the flow.



Summary and Analysis For Chapters 58-72

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 58-72 Summary

In Chapter 58, as Troy practices, he realizes that it's a lot of hard work. It's very different from the image he had previously had about being in a band. In his dreams, becoming a member of the band always meant fun. Now he realizes that it's a lot of hard work.

In Chapter 59, the gig is this weekend, and Troy isn't sure he's going to make it. Curt is getting angry with him for not whaling on the drums. It's just not in Troy's personality to lash out.

In Chapter 60, the closer they get to the gig, the more convinced Troy is that he made a huge mistake. He doesn't look the part, and he doesn't feel up to it.

In Chapter 61, on the day of the gig, Troy begins to feel sick. He is very nauseous. His father tries to talk with him about the concert, but Troy runs away to the bathroom. His father tells him that he is proud of his hard work. When Troy comes out of the bathroom, his father is gone.

In Chapter 62, he is feeling a bit better by the afternoon. Curt comes over, and he asks Curt if Curt thinks he is ready. His friend points out that he is technically good, but he's missing something. It's something in the way he relates the music.

In Chapter 63, two hours before the gig, Troy is feeling like a complete loser. All he sees is his own failure.

In Chapter 64, one hour before the gig, Troy can't believe it's happening. He still feel sick and his band member friends notice that he's panicking. He gets onto the stage and freezes. Curt has to play to the first song on his own. On the second song, Troy is supposed to play, but he is still frozen. He throws up on stage, all over the drum set. Curt laughs and covers for him, making it seem as if it's all been planned as a symbol for punk rock.

In Chapter 65, Troy bolts even though he knows he should stay and clean up. He feels completely humiliated.

In Chapter 66, Troy pretends that he is sick and stays home from school for three days. He ignores calls from Curt and ignores his drum set. The phone rings, and he answers it without thinking. It's Ollie, and he tells Troy that it wasn't as big a deal as he thought. He wants Troy to continue playing the drums, but Troy says he won't. Ollie says that's fine, but he makes a request. He wants Troy to get in touch with Curt. Apparently Curt thinks that Troy hates him since he won't answer the phone calls. He is sleeping in the park near Troy's apartment.



In Chapter 67, when Troy goes to find Curt, his friend is missing. He locates him in the subway station, playing for a crowd. Troy apologizes to Curt.

In Chapter 68, the two head for the diner they went to on the day they met. Curt looks worse than ever before. The waitress recognizes them and is kind to them.

In Chapter 69, Curt asks Troy why he bailed. As they order their food and watch the waitress leave, Curt realizes that Troy is hot for the waitress. He tells Troy that he can get her if he joins the band. Troy doesn't understand why Curt is so determined to have him as his drummer. Curt tries to explain to him what's behind punk rock.

In Chapter 70, since he is having a hard time explaining what he really means, Curt tells Troy to watch a couple in the restaurant. At first, Troy doesn't get it. Then he begins to see what Curt wants him to see. Instead of seeing the façade people put on, Troy really sees what people try to hide. Nobody is perfect.

In Chapter 71, Curt tells him that he needs a drummer and he knows that Troy really sees life as it is. This awareness will come out in the music.

In Chapter 72, Troy is crying, but Curt doesn't notice since his eyes are closed.

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 58-72 Analysis

In Chapter 58, the reality of participating in a band is very different from the dream of it. Troy realizes that it's extremely hard work.

In Chapter 59, things get a bit tense between Curt and Troy. Curt doesn't think he has a real drummer's attitude. Troy shows that he is his own man, and Curt grudgingly accepts the fact.

In Chapter 60, Troy has a slight regression emotionally as they get closer to the gig. Instead of feeling strong mentally and physically, he is back to feeling like a wimpy fat kid.

In Chapter 61, Troy felt sick the day he went to his first concert, and now he is feeling sick again as he prepares for the gig. His dad tries to calm him, and he tells Troy that he is proud. Troy get emotional about this.

In Chapter 62, Troy's mood is going up and down. By afternoon he is feeling better. He asks Curt if he thinks he is ready, hoping for some reassurance, but Curt calls it straight. He doesn't lie, and Troy becomes nervous once again. This shows that Curt won't sacrifice integrity for the sake of friendship. He is brutally honest.

In Chapter 63, over the past few weeks, Troy has been practicing drums both mentally and physically. Now he knows that he is physically capable of playing the drums, but he is panicking mentally.



In Chapter 64, everyone around Troy is getting nervous because they understand how incapacitated he is. Curt is upset at him. When Troy throws up all over the stage, Curt saved him and turns it into a positive thing.

In Chapter 65, Troy refuses to see the situation is positive. Instead, he just runs away. He feels like a complete failure.

In Chapter 66, in his humiliation, Troy stays home and tries to comfort himself with food. He ignores his friends until Ollie called him and asks him to get back in touch with Curt as a favor. While he is feeling like an outsider, he is actually the one who is shutting others out.

In Chapter 67, when Troy connects with Curt once again, Curt acts as if nothing is wrong and just insists that Troy owes him a meal.

In Chapter 68, he waitress recognizes the boys at the diner, and she welcomes them. Troy realizes his friend has taken money from him, but they both pretend it isn't so. It's a way that Curt can give back to Troy.

In Chapter 69, they talk about the concert, and Troy realizes that not only is Curt asking him to be a drummer, but he's actually trying to persuade him to be his drummer. Even after the disastrous situation they went through, Curt knows that there is something special about Troy.

In Chapter 70, Curt connects with people because he sees them as they truly are. He opens Troy's eyes to the reality of people and their behaviors.

In Chapter 71, once Troy sees how things really are, he feels free, and he feels raw emotion.

In Chapter 72, Troy's eyes are opened, his mind is opened, and his senses are opened now that he sees the world the way Curt sees it.



Summary and Analysis For Chapters 73-89

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 73-89 Summary

In Chapter 73, the two young men step outside the restaurant, and Troy is amazed at what he has just realized. He sees everything differently now. He turns to talk with Curt and discovers that his friend is passed out at his feet.

In Chapter 74, Troy's first reaction is to panic. He tries to wake up his friend, and someone nearby calls 911. A jogger gives Troy some water to splash on his friend's face. The water wakes up Curt and a bottle of NyQuil rolls out of his shirt onto the sidewalk.

In Chapter 75, Curt is very groggy and Troy decides to take him to the hospital even though his friend doesn't want to go there. He doesn't have insurance.

In Chapter 76, they wait in the waiting room for a very long time, and nobody pays any attention to them. Troy calls his father, and his father says he's going to come and help.

In Chapter 77, while he is waiting for his father, Troy decides he's going to take action. He demands attention from a nurse. She asks what medications Curt has taken, but Troy doesn't really know.

In Chapter 78, Troy has to sit by himself in the waiting area since he isn't allowed to go anywhere with Curt. He remembers the last time he was in the emergency room. It was the day his mother died. He was sitting there with his little brother, who was petrified. Troy sees his father walk in with his little brother behind him. Dayle looks scared. Dad comes over to Troy and takes control. The three of them go to visit Curt. He looks horrible - skin on bones covered with bruises. He tells them that he took lots of medications because he didn't feel well.

In Chapter 79, they get Curt's mother's phone number. Dad tries to call, but he hangs up when the stepfather answers. Dad stays with Curt, and the two brothers head home together. Troy asks Dayle if he is all right. Dayle says that it's not a problem since Curt is his friend. Troy says that Curt really likes Dayle and thinks he has potential as a roadie. Troy points out to Dayle that many people love him even when he doesn't win many trophies. Curt likes him for who he is.

In Chapter 80, Troy goes to visit Curt in the hospital. For the first time, he doesn't try to define himself.

In Chapter 81, Curt is in a regular hospital room and he is doing better. He has pneumonia and is taking medication for it. Dad tells Troy that he got through to Curt's mother, but she isn't going to visit. As Troy talks with his father, he emphasizes how



wonderful his friend is. He also acknowledges the fact that he is aware that his father never gave up on his own family. He was there for their mother, and he is there for the boys. Troy acknowledges that his father is not at fault for all his weight gain. His father tells him that he is proud of him.

In Chapter 82, Curt wakes up every once in a while to get more pain medication.

In Chapter 83, by Tuesday afternoon, Curt is doing much better. He watches TV and enjoys attention from the nurses.

In Chapter 84, two days later, Curt seems extremely happy. He tells Troy that they have another gig that Saturday. Troy questions whether he is going to be out of the hospital, and Curt says there is no way he will be out. However, he has a plan to break out. He shows Troy that he has a stash of drugs that he has put in a plant.

In Chapter 85, Troy knows he has a big decision to make. He goes to talk with Ollie and the two play drums together. Troy is so angry about the situation he is in that he doesn't think much about the music, all he thinks about is the release he gets pounding on the drums. Ollie compliments his playing.

In Chapter 86, Troy thinks he has a solution to the dilemma. He visits Curt and he tells him that the plant is starting to look bad. He offers to take the plant home. He'll give it back to Curt after the gig.

In Chapter 87, feeling like Judas, Troy takes the plant to the cafeteria where he has arranged to meet his father for lunch. Dayle is there as well. Troy tells his father about Curt's plan to break out. He says that he thinks his friend is not getting better because he has nowhere to go. Troy points out that Curt needs help, and he shows his father what's in the plant. He asks Dad to help him and surprisingly, finds support from Dayle.

In Chapter 88, at 4 o'clock, Troy talks with Curt and tells him that his father knows everything. Curt feels extremely betrayed, and Troy asks him to trust him. When Curt says that he doesn't have a problem because the medication was prescription, Troy points out bluntly that they weren't his prescription. Curt is terrified, thinking he won't have a chance at life. Troy tells him about his plan.

In Chapter 89, fifteen minutes before show time, everyone backstage is getting extremely nervous. Troy promises everyone that they are going to make it. The backdoor of The Dump swings open, and Dad comes in with Curt. The team is pretending to be annoyed, but he seems to be in his element. The two friends go on stage and Troy truly begins playing the drums.

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 73-89 Analysis

In Chapter 73, outside the restaurant, Troy looks at the world through new eyes, peering through new eyes. His awareness is contrasted by his unawareness as he turns around and notices his friend is passed out at his feet.



In Chapter 74, for once, Troy doesn't seem to mind being the center of attention. He will take all the help he can get as he tries to wake Curt up. He's so focused on his friends, he doesn't care what others think of him.

In Chapter 75, Curt is in really bad shape. He doesn't really have anyone to help him. Troy knows what to do, and he takes his friend to the hospital.

In Chapter 76, in a sense of twisted irony, nobody seems to see Troy. He is huge, but it's almost as if he's invisible. No one comes to help him so he calls his father. He knows his dad will be there to help him.

In Chapter 77, Troy decides to become assertive. He finally get someone's attention.

In Chapter 78, while he waits for his father, Troy has a flashback to the time when his mother died. It was a horrifying time for him as well as his brother. Now Troy's father comes and takes control. Dayle is there as well, and the three go to Curt as a unified front. Nobody has ever truly looked at him either. The boy is in a very sorry state.

In Chapter 79, back at home, Troy talks with his brother and realizes that while he is envying his brother for having everything, his brother is actually quite insecure. Troy has a moment of clarity where he reassures his brother. For years he had been waiting to hear words of reassurance, he just hadn't realized that he was the one that was supposed to say the words, helping someone else.

In Chapter 80, when Troy goes to the hospital the next day, he isn't feeling like a loser. He isn't feeling on top of the world. He has found a healthy balance between the two.

In Chapter 81, Curt is getting better, and it's obvious that he appreciates the luxury of having regular meals and a clean place to stay. The boy with the popularity really has a sad existence, which is now extremely obvious. His own mother won't even come to visit him. This helps Troy realize how good he has it, and he makes sure his father knows that he is aware of the fact that he is grateful for his father. His father responds by telling him that he is proud of him. The last time he said that, Troy was on the other side of a door. Now, he is acknowledging it face-to-face.

In Chapter 82, Troy is true to their friendship and remains with Curt. He realizes that many of Curt songs come from real-life experiences.

In Chapter 83, to Curt, living in the hospital is somewhat like a vacation. He thoroughly enjoys it.

In Chapter 84, even while he is in the hospital, Curt can't stay away from the music scene. He can barely move, but he sets up a gig for that Saturday. He knows he will not be out of the hospital by then, but he plans to break out. He is also taking advantage of the hospital medical supply, stealing his own stash, showing that his addiction isn't overcome.



In Chapter 85, when Troy met Curt he was a weak individual who couldn't stand up for himself no matter what. He worships his new friend. Now, the friendship is tested, and he realizes that he has to choose between his dream and his friendship.

In Chapter 86, Troy knows that one of the only ways he can save his friend is to betray him.

In Chapter 87, he enlists the help of his father and brother, really demonstrating his trust in them.

In Chapter 88, Troy talks to Curt, offering him a secure home and lasting friendship. Lashing out, Curt is feeling as if Troy has completely betrayed him. He doesn't think the idyllic situation will last, and he is angry at Troy for ruining his life. They have switched positions, and now Curt is standing on the symbolic precipice just as Troy once stood on the edge of the subway platform. This time, it's Troy who rescues.

In Chapter 89, Curt is in his glory. They have kidnapped him from the hospital, he is going to have his opportunity to perform, and there are some scouts in the audience. This time, when Troy goes on stage, he is ready to really play the drums and he is ready to live for real.



Characters

Troy Billings

This character is a 17-year-old boy who is over six feet tall and weighs almost 300 pounds. When the story begins, he is contemplating suicide, but he doesn't want people to laugh at him even after his death. He feels that people are always watching him and laughing at him. This character remembers a time when he was younger, when his mother was still alive, and he felt free and accepted by others. Since her death, he went to food for solace and lost his friends and self-esteem. He has respect for his father and cares about his brother even though his brother treats him terribly. He is hard-working, which is demonstrated as he puts in long hours of practice so he can become a drummer. He wants to achieve his own dreams, but not at the expense of others. This is shown when he puts his friendship with Curt ahead of any chance he might have for success as a drummer.

Curt MacCrae

This character is a homeless boy who has a keen sense of humor, an incredible talent for music, and a prescription drug addiction. He sees potential in Troy even when others don't. Constantly on the lookout for food and a place to grab some sleep for a few hours, this character latches onto Troy, inviting himself to his home. He doesn't really know how to fit in at the dinner table, and he is brutally honest when questioned about his home and job situation. He is very creative, as shown by his ability to help Troy get some style both in his dressing and in his room decor. He also sees the world differently from others, boiling actions and emotions down to their true essence. When he sings onstage, he transforms from a street bum into a vibrant character that can tap into the souls of everyone in the club. While he is a good friend who really sees people, this character is not reliable. He is also afraid to get too close to others so that he doesn't have to get rejected by them.

Dad

This character is a security guard with a military background. He runs his household with a firm yet loving hand.

Troy's Mom

This character has an intense love for her children. However, she passes away when they are still young.



Dayle

This character wins trophies regularly but still feels insecure. He tries to hide the insecurity by lashing out at his brother, treating him with scorn.

Ollie

This character is a great drummer who offers to teach Troy how to play the drums in exchange for Curt's playing in a gig with him.

Waitress

This character is old enough to be Troy's mother, but he is attracted to her. She treats Troy and Curt with kindness.

Stepfather

This character verbally abuses Curt and is so nasty Curt doesn't want to live with him. He scares Troy off when Troy goes to visit Curt.

Curt's Mom

This character has given up on her son and doesn't even come to him when he needs help.

Smack Metal Puppets

This is the group Troy sees in his first concert.

Rage/Tectonics

This is the group Curt plans to form with Troy.

Leon

This is one of two band members that Troy's father grills.

Piper

This is one of two band members that Troy's father grills.



Objects/Places

Subway

This is where Troy meets Curt. Curt often sleeps and plays music here.

Diner

This is where Curt and Troy go after they first meet, then again before Curt passes out.

Drums

This is what Troy puts time and effort into learning.

Park

This is where Curt sleeps after Troy's first performance.

Lower East Side

This is where Troy lives.

Locker

This is where Curt meets Troy. It's usually empty in front of it, but people gather around when Curt is there.

Mom's House

This is where Curt had his guitar and old music. The boys spend a wonderful afternoon there, even though the neighborhood is terrible.

The Dump

This is where Troy attends his first concert. He also takes lessons here.

Hospital

This is where Curt is taken. He loves it here and doesn't hurry to leave.



Plant

This is what Curt uses to hide his stash.

Prescription Drugs

This is what Curt is addicted to.



Themes

The Importance of Self-Esteem

As the story begins, Troy has very obvious issues with his self-esteem. He is constantly referring to himself and his obesity in a negative light. He is also contemplating suicide. When Curt wants to befriend him and when he invites Troy to join his band, Troy doesn't believe it's actually happening to him. He persuades himself that the entire afternoon and evening were part of a hallucination before he goes to school the next day and discovers that it all was real. The fact that Curt really does want to be his friend gives him a boost and helps him see himself in a new light. He realizes he does have something to offer others.

Throughout the story Troy has some setbacks, but overall his self-esteem grows. In contrast to Troy's initial low self esteem, both Curt and Dayle seem to have good things going for them. Curt is very popular and is amazing with music. Dayle has all sorts of trophies. As the story progresses, it becomes apparent that they each have their own struggles with self esteem. Curt is afraid to let anybody get too close to him because he doesn't think it's going to last. Dayle is constantly striving to excel because he thinks that it's the only way to get people to love him. By the end of the story, Troy has a good sense of self-esteem, his relationship with his brother is more solid, and Curt begins to understand what friendship truly means.

Seeing Others as They Really Are

Curt has a knack for tapping into people's souls using his music. When he sings and plays, raw emotion comes through, and he seems to be tuning in to everyone's individual story. This is how Troy feels as he watches his friend perform on stage. As they get to know each other better, Troy realizes that Curt gets his music from real life experiences, and these experiences are often very harsh. Curt tends to drift through life seemingly oblivious to what is going on around him. However, he is extremely observant. This is shown when he asks Troy to become his drummer - he sees a part of Troy that nobody else sees. He knows that Troy will be a good, stable addition to his band.

Ollie sees this as well, and he also sees that Curt needs help, even though others don't see it. Ollie realizes that Troy might be the best person to help their friend. In the restaurant, Curt teaches Troy to really observe and see others. It takes a long time, but soon the façade slips away. With this realization, Troy sees the world completely differently. He also sees himself differently. In the past he was always concerned that people were watching him and laughing at him. He becomes aware of the fact that they aren't. In fact, he is often invisible to others in spite of his size. Troy realizes that people are so busy trying to impress other people, that one has to look really hard to see their



own insecurities, but everyone has them. This gives him a stronger sense of self and it helps him identify with others.

The Music Scene

Troy had a brief introduction to drums in junior high school, but he never took it much further than that before this story began. Curt lives for and through music. His parents introduced him to classic rock groups when he was young, and he has happy memories of feeling the music. Now he is heavily into the punk rock scene. It appeals to him because it is so raw and because it is so true. To him, it defines the human element.

Troy is drawn to the world of punk rock as well, although he is not as demonstrative as the others. He keeps his collection hidden at first. He wants to break out and let his feelings out, but it isn't natural for him. Curt gets upset with him when he doesn't whale on the drums. It just is not in his personality.

Troy learns the techniques of drumming, but he lacks something such as true passion. When he goes to his first concert, he begins to let loose and really lets himself go, feeding off the energy of the crowd. Later on, things get tense in his own world and he has to make some tough decisions regarding his own future and the future of his friendship with Curt. He lets his feelings out during a drumming session. His true potential shines through. In the last scene of the book, he has become a new man and is filled with self-confidence.



Style

Point of View

"Fat Kid Rules the World" by K. L. Going is written in a first-person subjective point of view. The main character is Troy, a 17-year-old boy who is almost 300 lbs. This point of view is important to the story because it shows the character's innermost thoughts and feelings. The point of view is very consistent and never wavers from Troy's point of view. This helps the reader truly identify with the main character. It shows the progression of his thoughts and actions, thus clearly detailing his growth.

Setting

This novel takes place in the city. It makes sense with the story because one of the main characters is a homeless boy who comes from a hard background. He is addicted to prescription medication, and nobody seems to really care. He finds his own shelter and moves from place to place without anyone bothering him. The city is also the perfect setting for the punk rock scene, which one would not generally find in a small town.

Language and Meaning

Troy is in high school and he is a good student. The language of this novel reflects that since it's written from his point of view and he uses some advanced vocabulary. Curt and the other band members are more connected to the street and their language reflects this connection. They swear regularly and use potentially offensive language such as the f-word.

Structure

The first pages of this novel include a section of other books a reader might enjoy. These are books by other authors. The book officially begins after the title page. The chapters are labeled by numbers, and they don't have titles. The chapters are very short, with the longest running approximately three pages. The shortest chapters are only a paragraph long. There are 89 chapters in the 183-page book. The story is followed by a page of acknowledgements and a brief blurb about the author.



Quotes

"Everyone refers to him at the Blair Witch of the Lower East Side. And I just shook his hand" (Chapter 2, p. 4).

"There's something about being fat that makes everyone think they're doing you the favor" (Chapter 5, p. 10).

"In fact, this is probably the first time since fourth that I'm the center of attention and no one is laughing" (Chapter 13, p. 31).

"It's distorted and grotesque and I nod approvingly. Maybe this is where I fit" (Chapter 14, p. 33).

"Yeah...And my dad, my father I mean, taught me to play guitar, because he was a real kick-ass guitar player. But my mom, see...she taught me to love music" (Chapter 16, p. 38).

"He's on his knees leaning backward, making crazy punk rock faces and I swear he doesn't give a shit with he looks like" (Chapter 17, p. 40).

"Screw that," he says. "You make your size. You make your walls. It's not about what's out there" (Chapter 22, p. 50).

"What's ironic," he adds, shaking his head, "is that everyone's so busy trying not to look like they're looking at you that they're really not looking at you" (Chapter 26, p. 61).

"The Curt I know, the one who's always trying to get something or keep something, suddenly becomes a kid listening to Beatles records. It's like watching layers of grime wash down a clean, white drain" (Chapter 40, p. 87).

"The band raises the challenge and the mass of bodies gives its answer through the smashing of fists, faces, arms, and legs" (Chapter 42, p. 93).

"He needs someone solid. Someone who'll toe the steady line, freak out when he needs you to freak out, and rein in when he's on the ledge" (Chapter 45, p. 102).

"I'll wait for Curt to defend me, but in the end, he'll side with the skinny people because he's king of their world" (Chapter 60, p. 126).

"I feel like I've just seen someone murdered. Or maybe I've found salvation. I don't know which" (Chapter 71, p. 148).



"I've spent years waiting for those exact words and it never once occurred to me to give them away" (Chapter 79, p. 158).

"I want a shot at being on stage, not in the crowd but on stage, saying everything that's in my distorted, fat brain" (Chapter 85, p. 169).

Topics for Discussion

Why did Troy contemplate suicide and why didn't he follow through with it?

Why did Curt try to save Troy, and why did he ask him to be his drummer?

What did Curt teach Troy about his size?

Explain the appeal of punk rock for both Troy and Curt.

How did Curt change when he was on stage?

Compare and contrast Troy's home life with Curt's life.

How did the two friends end up saving each other?