

# **The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger Study Guide**

**The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger by Stephen King**

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## Plot Summary

"The man in black fled across the desert and the gunslinger followed." This line starts the story of the gunslinger and it cleanly sums up the motivation of the main character and plot of the story. This story follows the hero, the gunslinger, Roland Deschain, as he pursues the man in black across a desert wasteland and into the mountains. He has followed the man for twelve years and his pursuit never wavers for any reason. He is willing to sacrifice all, even his own life, to find the man in black.

Roland meets many people along the way and the reader is given a glimpse into his history and personality as he makes his journey across many miles to find the man in black. Several of the people Roland meets are used as human traps by the man in black to thwart Roland from capturing him.

There is a strong connection between Roland and the man in black. They come from the same place and share a culture and way of life. The man in black is an evil force, while the gunslinger is a vengeful but altruistic force. The gunslinger's ultimate goal is to find the man in black so that he can get answers from him, some of which relate to the Tower. The gunslinger also aims to kill the man in black when he finds him, but only after his questions are answered. Roland, the gunslinger, does finally catch the man in black, but only after Roland makes a blood sacrifice to the man. The answers Roland receives are not what he bargained for. This is not the end of his journey, but only the beginning.



# Chapter 1 Section 1

## Chapter 1 Section 1 Summary

This section introduces the "gunslinger" and his mission. The gunslinger, a self-possessed and resolute man with a high degree of fortitude, heads into an unwelcoming desert, barren and ominous. He is described in great detail in this section. He wears two guns with sandalwood stocks across his hips. His attire is that of a cowboy. The author mentions that the world has "moved on" and things are different from some previous time and place not yet revealed to the reader.

The gunslinger has been in pursuit of the man in black for two months. The trail seems to be cold because the desert wipes away all traces of life. Initially, the man in black does not leave behind much to track him with. The gunslinger comes upon cold campfires made with devil-grass, but no other sign can be found. The gunslinger wonders if the campfires are some sign from the man in black, meant to convey some meaning to him that he is yet to decipher.

## Chapter 1 Section 1 Analysis

The author wants to give the reader a clear image of the gunslinger as a man of purpose and authority. This first section explains much of the plot, since it describes the mission of the gunslinger and his resolute pursuit of the man in black. The gunslinger has but one goal: find the man in black.



## Chapter 1 Section 2

### Chapter 1 Section 2 Summary

The gunslinger comes down from the last of the foothills. He has a donkey by his side. He passes many small dwellings, mostly inhabited by lepers and madmen. As the gunslinger reaches what he believes to be the last hut, he meets a young man who is tending his crop of corn. The man is the only sane and leprosy-free person the gunslinger has met along his way. His name is Brown and he has a talking pet crow named Zoltan.

The man in black passed by Brown and Zoltan several weeks ago and Brown tells the gunslinger that the man stopped and ate supper with them. Brown asks the gunslinger if the man in black is a Sorcerer and the gunslinger tells him yes. Brown invites the gunslinger to stay for supper and fill his water bags from the well. The gunslinger fills his bags and then falls asleep against a wall in Brown's hut.

### Chapter 1 Section 2 Analysis

The reader is given some insight to the gunslinger's personality. Even though he is determined to accomplish only one goal, he is amiable enough and seems to like Brown. Brown has insight and good intuition.



# Chapter 1 Section 3

## Chapter 1 Section 3 Summary

Brown wakes the gunslinger five hours later and tells him that his mule has died. He also tells him dinner is ready and to come and eat. Brown surprises the gunslinger by making a blessing of thanks at the table. The gunslinger asks Brown if he believes in an afterlife and Brown says that he thinks they are in it.

## Chapter 1 Section 3 Analysis

Brown is obviously trustworthy, since the gunslinger comes to no harm as he sleeps in Brown's hut. The gunslinger is surprised at Brown's prayer of thanks and philosophy about life.



# Chapter 1 Section 4

## Chapter 1 Section 4 Summary

The two men eat a dinner of beans and corn. The men talk about the town of Tull and the gunslinger asks Brown if he has ever been there. Brown has been there but avoids it if he can. The gunslinger tells Brown that he was almost killed in Tull by a man who people said was touched by God. In reality, the gunslinger says, the man in black enchanted the attacker as a trap. The gunslinger waits for Brown to question him about the incident, but he does not. The gunslinger begins to think that the man in black sent him to this hut or that possibly Brown is the man in black in disguise. He decides to tell Brown the story of the town of Tull and what happened there.

## Chapter 1 Section 4 Analysis

A clear image of how hard life is, not just for the gunslinger, but also for the squatter, Brown, is evident in their gratitude for a meal of hard beans and tough corn. The reader gets a feel for just how cunning and frightening the man in black is. He has obviously set traps for the gunslinger before, so even though the gunslinger likes Brown, he is not sure if the man is another trap. Brown does have some clear and wise insight that the gunslinger finds unusual. He wants to unload his story of Tull and Brown is a good listener.





# Chapter 1 Section 5

## Chapter 1 Section 5 Summary

The gunslinger relays his story to Brown, starting with his entry into the town. He hears a piano playing the tune *Hey Jude*. He has left a forest and has entered the flat country. It is dry and ugly in and around Tull. There are few people in the streets. None of them seem friendly or interested in speaking with the gunslinger. He brings his mule to a barn and gives the hostile owner a gold piece to care for the mule and put it up for a night or two.

The gunslinger asks a group of sullen boys playing marbles in the street where a nearby restaurant might be. Only one boy answers him. The boy sends the gunslinger to Sheb's honky-tonk. The gunslinger enters the bar and orders three hamburgers from the female barkeep. The occupants of the bar eye him warily and are as hostile as those on the street. He pays the barkeep with a gold coin and does not ask for change. This seems to anger her, but she takes the gold and serves him his burgers and beer.

When the gunslinger finishes his meal, he feels a hand on his shoulder. A man who was asleep at the door is now staring into his face. The man smells of devil-grass. The gunslinger realizes that the man does not smoke the devil-grass but eats it. It has turned the man's teeth green. The gunslinger also realizes that the man should have been dead and is not because of the man in black.

The man who smells of devil-grass speaks to the gunslinger in the "High Speech," which shocks the gunslinger. It has been years since he has heard it and he thought he was the last of those left in the world who spoke it. The man asks him for a gold piece and the gunslinger gives it to him. The man takes the gold and returns to his table in the corner.

This whole exchange frightens the other customers in the honky-tonk and the place clears out. Everyone, including the piano player, leaves. The barkeep is very angry at the gunslinger. She blames him for the loss of her customers. The gunslinger asks her about the man in black's visit to Tull and she refuses to tell him unless he has sex with her. The gunslinger agrees. She closes the bar for the night and both go up to her room above the honky-tonk.

## Chapter 1 Section 5 Analysis

There is a bad feeling in Tull. The inhabitants are obviously very wary of strangers. It is not explained to the reader what the "High Speech" is nor what devil-grass is, but the implications are very evident. Devil-grass has an addictive drug effect on people who smoke it and the old man at the bar has gone beyond smoking it to eating it. It should have killed him, but he is alive and the man in black is somehow responsible. The High Speech is obviously some language known only to a select few people and from a time



long ago. The gunslinger is so shocked to here it coming from the addicted old man that he absently hands over a gold piece without question. It is clear from this exchange that the man in black has set some type of trap.



## Chapter 1 Section 6

### Chapter 1 Section 6 Summary

After the gunslinger and the barkeep have sex, she begins to talk. She explains that the man at the bar, Nort, was dead and then he was touched by God. She details Nort's fall into addiction and how the devil-grass started to take over his soul. Children would chase him in the street, tormenting him. He died in front of the honky-tonk, simply doubled over, threw-up, fell over and died. She stops talking and the gunslinger asks about the man in black. She is reluctant to tell him, but she relents and begins to tell him the end of the tale.

### Chapter 1 Section 6 Analysis

The story the barkeep tells the gunslinger is very emotionally draining for her. She does not want to talk about the man in black, but her need for the gunslinger propels her to continue. She believes that Nort was touched by God, but the gunslinger knows better.



# Chapter 1 Section 7

## Chapter 1 Section 7 Summary

The barkeep, whose name is Alice or Allie for short, begins her tale: The man in black comes into Tull in the late afternoon in a worn cart led by a tired horse. He looks like a monk or a priest, since he is dressed in long black robes with a black hood that covers his face. He tethers his horse, takes a saddlebag from the cart and walks into the honky-tonk. Alice is the only one to notice him. The patrons are drunk and do not even see him. It is the night of Nort's wake and Nort is laid out on two tables in the center of the room while the "mourners" carry on around him.

The man in black asks Alice for a good whiskey and then asks her about the dead man. Alice is resentful of the way the patrons are acting. She is offended by their merry-making during his wake, as she was offended by the way they treated him in life. She asks the man in black if he is a priest and he replies that he is not and asks for a second whisky. He throws her a silver coin as payment, asking for no change, just like the gunslinger. The man in black tells her that she cared for Nort and that she is softhearted and afraid. She becomes angry at this, but he puts a spell on her that takes her anger from her.

The man in black laughs aloud and the strength of his laughter calls attention from the patrons. He gets up from his seat and tells the people that he will show them a wonder to behold. He stands over Nort, grinning down at him and begins to spit in his face. Some of the patrons flee the bar and others stand around Nort and the man in black, fascinated with what he is doing.

Nort suddenly draws a deep breath, as the man in black makes circles over him with his body. Nort's eyes open and Alice, who was still behind the bar, panics and bolts up into her room above. She locks the door and sits on the floor giggling. When she works up the nerve to return to the bar, the man in black is gone and Nort is sitting at a table near the front door.

Nort smiles at Allie and says hello. He tells her he wants to stop chewing the grass. He doesn't enjoy it anymore, but he shakes if he doesn't have it. He says that the man in black could have made him stop wanting the weed, if he brought him back to life and he begins to weep. Things go back to normal after a while. The children resume their taunting of Nort and the customers return to the bar.

## Chapter 1 Section 7 Analysis

Allie is oddly attracted to the man in black, just as she is to the gunslinger. Her tale is disturbing and frightening. It is clear why she did not want to repeat it. The people of the town, including Nort himself, remain unaware that the man in black is a sorcerer and believe that he is a man of God.

# Chapter 1 Section 8

## Chapter 1 Section 8 Summary

Allie's story ends and the gunslinger is so quiet that she thinks he has fallen asleep. She starts to doze herself, when he suddenly asks her if that is the end of the story. She tells him that it is. The gunslinger tells her that the man in black has left a trap for him in Tull and that he will not be leaving right away. Allie is relieved at this news. They both fall asleep.

## Chapter 1 Section 8 Analysis

Allie's need for attention and affection from a man, any man is so great that the idea of this total stranger leaving is upsetting to her.



## Chapter 1 Section 9

### Chapter 1 Section 9 Summary

In the morning, Allie makes the gunslinger breakfast. He asks her if she has a map of the desert. Taking this as a sign that he will be leaving, she becomes very upset. He walks to her and tells her that he is going to see the man who has his mule. He wants to get a map and to see that the mule continues to be looked after, if he is going to be staying a while. When he leaves she begins to cry in gratitude.

### Chapter 1 Section 9 Analysis

The gunslinger can only think of how much further away the man in black is getting. He knows that the sorcerer has been heading south since he has been on his trail. Allie is already attached to the gunslinger. She is so attached, in fact, that she cries when she realizes that he will stay a while longer. She is very lonely and alone in the town of Tull and desperate for companionship.



# Chapter 1 Section 10

## Chapter 1 Section 10 Summary

Kennerly is the man who has been keeping the gunslinger's mule. The man has many daughters, four that the gunslinger can see. Kennerly is both hostile and submissive toward the gunslinger. He shoos his eldest daughter, who is curiously watching the gunslinger, into the house, telling her that he will hit her if she doesn't get inside.

The gunslinger asks Kennerly what is out there, as he points to the south. Kennerly tells him only dwellers, weed and desert. The desert is about three hundred miles long or more. Kennerly does not know for sure. He tells the gunslinger that is the way the other man went when he left, referring to the man in black. The gunslinger asks Kennerly if he knows what is after the desert. He says that his father once told him there were mountains after the desert. Other folks have told him that the world ends at the brink of the desert.

The gunslinger gives him another gold coin and tells him to look after his mule. When he leaves, all he knows about the desert is that it is vast. The gunslinger also realizes whatever trap the man in black has set for him has not played out yet.

## Chapter 1 Section 10 Analysis

The gunslinger wonders about Kennerly's treatment of his daughters, but he does not show it outwardly. He does not trust the man, but on the other hand, Kennerly does not rattle the gunslinger. He gets little in the way of information from the man. The gunslinger will have to stay in Tull for a bit longer until he finds out what the man in black has left behind for him.



# Chapter 1 Section 11

## Chapter 1 Section 11 Summary

The gunslinger and Allie are in bed when Sheb, the piano player and owner of the honky-tonk, kicks open her bedroom door with a knife in his hand. Four days have passed since the gunslinger arrived in Tull. He feels a growing affection for Alice and wonders if this is the trap that the man in black has set for him.

Sheb brings his knife down and the gunslinger grabs his wrists and breaks them. Sheb begins to sob. Allie was his, he tells the gunslinger. Allie puts on a robe and chastises Sheb for his stupidity. Then, she wraps his wrists in splints. The gunslinger feels empathy for the man. Sheb leaves and Allie wants to have sex with the gunslinger. He refuses and goes to sleep.

## Chapter 1 Section 11 Analysis

The author's famous ability to start a chapter or section with an attention-getting event is displayed in this section. "They were in bed when Sheb kicked the door open and came in with the knife," this section begins. The author adds other details and then returns to the action. This is one of King's methods of pulling the reader into the story and holding the reader's attention. It can be found throughout this book. The gunslinger feels empathy for Sheb's feeling of loss concerning Allie. However, he does not think when he swiftly breaks the man's wrists. It is a reaction honed over many years of practice.





# Chapter 1 Section 12

## Chapter 1 Section 12 Summary

The bar is closed the next night and it is considered a Sabbath day in Tull. The gunslinger goes to the small church while Allie stays behind in the bar, cleaning up and doing her chores. She does not like the woman who preaches at the church. The gunslinger stands in the shadows, listening to the sermon. The preacher is described as a very large woman who looks to weigh about three hundred pounds. Her hair is a beautiful rich brown and her skin is unmarked and lovely. The gunslinger feels lust for her immediately. She is a powerful speaker and preacher and has a rapt audience in the desolate townspeople. The gunslinger listens to her with admiration for her oration.

The preacher begins to tell the townspeople about the Interloper, a stranger in their midst who brings the devil and temptation with him. She tells them that they must resist the lure of his charms. She tells them that the Interloper has been around since the dawn of man and was the one who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. He is the Antichrist come to lead them to hell. The congregation is putty in her hands and vows to forsake the Interloper if they see him. The gunslinger feels uneasy as he retreats out of the church and heads back to Allie's. He feels that the time of confrontation is near.

## Chapter 1 Section 12 Analysis

The unusual attraction the gunslinger feels for the woman preacher makes him realize that she must be the trap set for him by the man in black. He is amazed by her ability to hypnotize and illicit passion in the people of Tull.



## Chapter 1 Section 13

### Chapter 1 Section 13 Summary

The gunslinger and Alice are in bed again and he asks about the woman preacher. She tells him that the preacher has been in town twelve years and that she only comes out of her house on Sundays to scare the townspeople with her damnation sermons. He wants to see the preacher but Alice tells him that she won't see him. Alice sounds frightened. The gunslinger asks where the preacher woman comes from and he knows Allie is lying when she tells him that she does not know. He asks again and she confesses that the preacher came from the "dwellers" in the desert. He wants to know where she lives and Alice tells him.

### Chapter 1 Section 13 Analysis

The gunslinger now knows that the preacher woman from the desert is the trap set for him by the man in black. Alice knows something too and she is afraid for him to go and see the woman.

# **Chapter 1 Section 14**

## **Chapter 1 Section 14 Summary**

The gunslinger knows that this will be his last day in Tull. Alice also senses that he will be leaving soon. She does not speak to him as she serves him breakfast. He finishes eating and grabs his hat. He will see her alive again only one more time.

## **Chapter 1 Section 14 Analysis**

This is a very short, one-half page, transitional section that takes the gunslinger out of the bar and to the preacher woman. It also serves to build suspense in the reader.



# Chapter 1 Section 15

## Chapter 1 Section 15 Summary

The gunslinger reaches the shack that belongs to Sylvia Pittston, the woman preacher. He knocks on the door, which has a wooden cross nailed to it. The preacher does not come to the door and after the second knock with no response, he kicks the door in. She is sitting in the hall in a large rocking chair with a shawl drawn around her ample shoulders.

The preacher looks at the gunslinger steadily and tells him that he will never catch the man in black because the gunslinger walks with the devil. The gunslinger asks her if the man in black came to her and she says that he came to her bed and talked to her in the Tongue. She says that the man in black is an angel of God. He told her this and he healed the weed-addicted Nort. She also tells the gunslinger that the man in black told her that the gunslinger would be following him and that he is the Antichrist.

The man in black told the preacher that the gunslinger would want to bed her and if he tries he will pay with his life. She is pregnant with the child of an angel. She calls herself the Bride of God and tells the gunslinger that he would not dare touch her because of this. The gunslinger walks toward her and asks her what is after the desert. She will not tell him. He takes his gun and points it between her legs, telling her he will remove the demon in her belly. She screams to him that the mountains lie beyond the desert. The man in black will stop on the other side of the mountains and build his strength in meditation. Her body shivers and she tells him he has killed the child. He tells her there was no child or demon.

## Chapter 1 Section 15 Analysis

The crazy preacher, Sylvia Pittston, is the trap set by the man in black. She believes that she is pregnant with the man in black's child. She is mad and the man in black easily manipulates her, using her religious fervor to detain the gunslinger.



# Chapter 1 Section 16

## Chapter 1 Section 16 Summary

The gunslinger heads toward Kennerly's to retrieve his mule. The air over Tull is dead quiet. Kennerly is waiting for him and asks if he is leaving before the storm. The gunslinger tells him yes, he is leaving and asks for his mule. The gunslinger sees the man look over his shoulder, grinning and he steps out of the way just in time to miss being hit in the head by a piece of stove wood thrown by Kennerly's eldest daughter Soobie.

Soobie looks at the gunslinger dully as she puts her finger in her mouth. Kennerly attempts to explain or apologize, but the gunslinger simply ignores the whole event and prods the man to get his mule. Kennerly shuffles to retrieve the mule. He comes back with the mule. As the gunslinger leaves, Kennerly tells his daughter to tend to her sister and she quietly defies him.

## Chapter 1 Section 16 Analysis

Kennerly planned on robbing the gunslinger, but his plan was way laid. The gunslinger does not have any interest in retaliation, nor is he angry. He is just anxious to leave Tull now that he knows where the man in black has gone and understands the trap set for him.



# Chapter 1 Section 17

## Chapter 1 Section 17 Summary

The gunslinger walks down the center of town with the mule and stops at the honky-tonk, but Allie is not there. He fills his bag with water and takes some provisions. He heads back into the street. He hopes that he can avoid the final trap, but he doubts it.

The gunslinger hears a shrill scream from behind him and doors start to open along the road. Men, women and children pour into the street, all holding some weapon in their hands. Some have knives and some have pieces of wood. He does not think. He simply grabs for the guns at his hips and starts shooting. As he turns, the first person coming toward him is Allie. Her face is distorted. She is being forced forward by Sheb and she begs the gunslinger not to shoot her. His hands are trained, though and he starts shooting before he can think. He kills Allie and Sheb and they fall to the ground.

The rest of the townspeople fall on him, beating at him with sticks. The preacher woman Sylvia is behind them, screaming to them that he is the Antichrist, the Interloper she told them about. She says that they must bring him down. The gunslinger runs through them, shooting a path and they follow him, never stopping or hesitating. They are caught in the heat of religious fervor, being led by their preacher. The gunslinger keeps shooting and reloading. They chase him through town, hitting him and trying to get at him. The gunslinger just plows them down.

The gunslinger shoots one of Kennerly's younger daughters, who is coming after him with a knife. The crowd halts for a moment in shock. Then Sylvia runs toward him, screaming, a wooden cross in each hand. He just has time to reload and shoot her down. The people do not stop pursuing him and he has to keep shooting. He gets hit in the head with a knife and falls to the ground. They are on him as he keeps shooting and shooting. Finally, they begin to retreat. His hands seem possessed and he continues to shoot until every last resident in Tull is dead.

Silence fills the town and the gunslinger is bleeding from twenty different wounds. He sees the body of Nort, the weed-eater, crucified on the honky-tonk's roof. He walks back to where he started. He gets his mule and brings it back to Kennerly's stable. Then he goes back to the honky-tonk and cuts Nort's body down. He goes inside, eats, drinks three beers and goes to sleep in Alice's bed. In the morning, he bandages all his wounds and leaves the town of Tull.

## Chapter 1 Section 17 Analysis

The shootout in the street was the ultimate trap. The town of Tull itself was a trap. The gunslinger cannot stop himself from shooting. He reacts instinctively, without thinking, as he did when he and Allie were attacked with a knife. The gunslinger's hands have been trained to kill and although he does not want to shoot many of the townspeople, he

knows that if he is to survive he has no choice. His act of contrition is to cut down Nort, who has been crucified by the people of Tull in their religious zeal.



## Chapter 1 Section 18

### Chapter 1 Section 18 Summary

The gunslinger thinks Brown has fallen asleep. Just as he is about to get up to lay out his sleeping bag, Brown asks him if he feels better now that he has told the tale. The gunslinger asks why he should feel bad and Brown tells him because he is human. Brown tells the gunslinger that he is very close to the man in black.

### Chapter 1 Section 18 Analysis

The gunslinger asks Brown who he really is. The gunslinger can't seem to fathom that someone this wise is just surviving out in the desert with no other means or goals in life. Brown says he is just who he is. The gunslinger truly likes Brown and so again the reader is struck by the paradox of the gunslinger's personality. He is a cold-blooded killer, but he has great humanity inside him.



# Chapter 1 Section 19

## Chapter 1 Section 19 Summary

In the morning, Brown feeds the gunslinger and sends him on his way. The gunslinger asks about the mule and Brown tells him that he will eat it. They shake hands. Brown nods toward the south and advises the gunslinger to "walk easy." The gunslinger leaves and looks back once more at the man and his crow. Brown is rooting in his corn bed and the crow is sitting on top of the roof perched like a gargoyle.

## Chapter 1 Section 19 Analysis

The gunslinger is satisfied that Brown is not a trap set by the man in black. He was simply a wise man living in the desert. The gunslinger leaves Brown's hut relieved of the burden of Tull and refreshed for his long journey ahead.

# **Chapter 1 Section 20**

## **Chapter 1 Section 20 Summary**

The gunslinger sleeps at his campfire. He has vivid dreams. He thinks more and more of Cort, the man who taught him how to shoot. He wakes from his sleep and looks at the last of his fire. He is a romantic and guards this knowledge jealously. This is what makes him think of Cort again. He picks up his tote and moves again along the desert.

## **Chapter 1 Section 20 Analysis**

The author sneaks some of the gunslinger's past into this last section of Chapter 1. Cort, the man who taught the gunslinger how to shoot, is on the gunslinger's mind. He does not know where Cort is because the world has moved on, but he is reminded of him when he thinks of his own romanticism.



# Chapter 2 Section 1

## Chapter 2 Section 1 Summary

As the gunslinger walks through the barren desert with his water nearly gone and his senses starting to diminish, the rhyme and memories of his mother come to him in frustrating waves. He thinks he may soon be dead. As he continues to walk, the rhyme continues to play over and over in his mind.

Suddenly, the gunslinger sees something close ahead. Beyond it, he can see the mountains far in the distance. He can barely see from the sand that has been abrading his eyes and the relentless sun that beats on his unprotected face. He is becoming delirious. He falls and gets up. The building that was in the distance is now in front of him. He sees that there are two buildings, enclosed by a fallen fence. One building was once a stable and the other was a house or an inn. This is the abandoned way station he was told about in Tull.

The gunslinger sees someone sitting in the shadows, leaning against the building. He thinks it is the man in black. He does not feel any excitement, since he thought he would catch up to the man in black at last. The childhood rhyme continues to drum in his head as he draws one of his guns and starts toward the figure. He runs forward and brings his gun up, shouting, "You're covered! You're covered!" The figure stands up and as the gunslinger wonders why the man in black looks so different, he realizes that the person standing there is a small boy and not the sorcerer.

The gunslinger shakes his head in disbelief, thinking he is hallucinating. The boy remains standing in front of him. The gunslinger holsters his gun, sways and falls on his face into the sand. When the gunslinger wakes up, he is on his back with soft hay piled under his head. His body is cool and his face is covered in water. The boy squats down beside him and hands him a tin cup filled with water. The gunslinger sips the water slowly and carefully. The boy says that his name is John Chambers, Jake for short.

The gunslinger throws up the water and Jake gets him more. The gunslinger watches Jake as he heads around the stable to the pump. Jake seems about nine years old, handsome, with sun washed blond hair and a sturdy build. Jake tells the gunslinger that he wasn't sure what to do when he thought the gunslinger was going to shoot him. The gunslinger tells the boy that he thought Jake was someone else. The boy asks if the gunslinger thought he was the priest. At the gunslinger's questioning, Jake says that a priest camped in the yard of the stable. Jake was in the house and did not like the look and feel of the man, so he hid. The priest stayed only one night and moved on in the morning toward the mountains.

The gunslinger asks Jake how long ago the priest was there and the boy says that he's not sure, but it could not have been too long ago. Jake has not been there long. The boy brings some dried meat and more water. Jake is not sure where he came from or



how he got there. The gunslinger asks Jake to tell him what he remembers and the boy describes what the reader realizes is the island of modern Manhattan. The gunslinger does not recognize the description.

The gunslinger wants to put Jake to sleep to try to find out where the boy is from and what happened to him. The boy agrees and the gunslinger hypnotizes Jake. He asks Jake where he is and Jake describes his life and his world to the gunslinger.

Jake is an only child of affluent parents. He goes to private school and is mostly cared for by the hired help: cooks, nannies and tutors. None of his parents' employees are particularly warm and loving to Jake. His parents don't hate him, but they seem to have overlooked him. They are very busy with their own lives. Jake becomes very professional. He is efficient and he is a loner at school. He is not an average boy. One day, Jake sees the man in black out of the corner of his eye as he goes to cross the street and the man in black pushes Jake in front of a fast moving car. As he lies in the street dying, he hears a voice telling the people to move away. The voice says that he is a priest and wants to perform an act of contrition. The man in black stands over Jake and in horror Jake looks away. He dies looking at his own unmoving hand as it rests against the pavement.

Jake's memories end at this point, just before he finds himself alone in the desert. The gunslinger sits and ponders this information. The boy has fallen asleep and the gunslinger himself is tired. He falls asleep beside the boy. When he wakes, it is almost dark and the boy is gone. The gunslinger sees a flame in the darkness over on the porch of the inn. Jake is on the porch with a kerosene lamp. The gunslinger sits down with Jake and tells him he is after the man in black. He says that the boy will have to come along. The gunslinger cannot leave Jake there, since the boy will die on his own. He asks Jake if there are any other provisions in the inn besides the dried meat and Jake says there is a cellar that he was afraid to go into because it is so dark.

The next day, the gunslinger goes into the basement. He finds cans of food and sends them up to Jake. He hears the foundation creak and sees the wall before him split. He yells to Jake to get out of the building. He feels a presence in the room and in the High Speech, he tells the presence to speak. The voice of a demon tells him, "Go slow past the Drawers, gunslinger. While you travel with the boy, the man in black travels with your soul in his pocket." The gunslinger walks over to the wall and reaches inside. He pulls out a jawbone and puts it in his back pocket.

Jake and the gunslinger head out across the desert with full water bags and cans of food in their sacks. On their fourth day out, Jake begins to tire and they lay down to rest. The gunslinger has been thinking about the past a lot. As the boy sleeps, the gunslinger's mind goes back to a distant memory.



## Chapter 2 Section 1 Analysis

The gunslinger thinks he has finally found the man in black. It is lucky, however, for him that what he found instead is a young boy. The gunslinger is so weak from the journey across the desert that he would have surely perished in a confrontation with the man in black at that particular point. He is not sure what trap the man in black has set for him with Jake, but the man in black killed the boy in his time and sent him to the desert. The gunslinger is not sure yet why. He must bring the boy with him and within a few days he becomes fond of Jake, his endurance and bravery. Jake reminds the gunslinger of himself when he was a boy. Jake's presence and the stress of following the man in black has been bringing the past back to the gunslinger in vivid detail.



## Chapter 2 Section 2

### Chapter 2 Section 2 Summary

The gunslinger thinks back to a long-past memory. The sky is white and the smell of rain is in the air. He is with his teacher Cort and his friend Cuthbert, another student of Cort's. They are learning to train Cort's hawk David. The gunslinger, whose given name was Roland, watches as Cuthbert lets the hawk fly from his arm. He does it wrong, though and the bird gets a rough start. He gets several vicious smacks from their teacher for this indiscretion.

Cuthbert hates Cort and dreams of one day killing the man. Their teacher is very hard on them and has no mercy. Because of Cuthbert's foul up with the hawk, Cort tells him that he will go without supper for the night and he then dismisses the boys for the day. Roland and Cuthbert head back to the castle and Roland tells his friend that the cook, Hax, is not fond of Cort and will sneak them some dinner without giving Cuthbert away. Hax is a kind man and is kind to all the children of the court. He gives them a fine meal and then sends them to get dessert from one of his helpers. A scullery boy comes in with a guard who is there to see Hax.

Roland and Cuthbert take their dessert outside to eat on the stairs. Hax and the guard come outside to talk and the boys accidentally overhear the conversation, unseen by either man below. They are making a plan to kill the people of Farson with poisoned meat. They are doing this in the name of "The Good Man," someone both men admire and whose beliefs they follow. Hax is deterred by the idea of killing small children, but the guard assures him it is for the greater good and that the children will feel no pain.

The boys know what they must do. They both go home and tell their fathers, who are gunslingers, rulers and keepers of the peace of their land. Hax is sentenced to die for his treason. He will hang the next day. The boys tell their fathers that they want to witness the hanging. While at first the boys are brave, the reality of the hanging is very upsetting to them both. After it is done, Cuthbert declares that he enjoyed it. This does not surprise Roland, although he does not claim to feel the same way. He does however, understand it.

### Chapter 2 Section 2 Analysis

Roland, the gunslinger, is thinking back to the past and the reader is given a glimpse of his life as one of the last of his kind. His father was a gunslinger, as was his father before him. There are no more of their breed left in the world now, though. Roland is the last. He was taught to be hard and ruthless by his teacher Cort and his own childhood ended early. Similarly, Jake's own life is hard and his childhood is abruptly cut short.



## Chapter 2 Section 3

### Chapter 2 Section 3 Summary

Jake tells the gunslinger to look up at the mountains. Faint and small in the distance, the gunslinger sees the man in black scaling the mountain above them. Jake wants to know if they will catch him. The gunslinger tells him they will, but on the other side of the mountain and only if they get going again.

Jake and the gunslinger begin their ascent of the mountain, always watching above them as the man in black continues to move up higher and higher. The gunslinger realizes that the boy is a sacrifice and he looks with sorrow at Jake's young and innocent face in the firelight of their campfire as they rest for the night. They both fall asleep curled by the fire.

### Chapter 2 Section 3 Analysis

The gunslinger knows that somehow Jake will have to die once they catch up to the man in black on the other side of the mountain and he wonders if the boy knows this also.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

The gunslinger is startled out of his sleep. He dreams about his love Susan and about watching her be burned alive. She is screaming to him in his dream about the boy. "Roland the boy!" she yells and in his dream he looks up to a window and sees Jake with a spike in his forehead. This dream is what startles him out of his sleep.

The gunslinger jumps up and scans the campsite for Jake, but the boy is gone. The gunslinger runs, following the boy's track into the grass and through a spring. He comes to a clearing with a ring of tall, black stones surrounding it. In the center, there is a table of stone, an altar. The boy is standing before it swaying back and forth.

The gunslinger steps inside the ring of stone and Jake screams and recoils. At the same time, the gunslinger feels the spirit of an oracle in his head. As he walks toward Jake, he pulls the jawbone he retrieved from the cellar from his pocket. Not really thinking about this action, he does it on instinct. He holds the bone in front of Jake.

Jake collapses and the gunslinger picks him up and walks out of the circle with him. He can feel the oracle's jealous anger at losing its prize. The gunslinger looks down at Jake's innocent face and hugs him, knowing that he loves the boy. He can feel the mocking laughter coming from the man in black from high above. The next morning the gunslinger gives Jake the jawbone for protection. He says that he must leave for a little while. He takes a drop of mescaline and waits a while before leaving. He does chores around the site, waiting for the drug's effects to kick in.

After a while, the gunslinger says that he must go and Jake tells him to be careful. The gunslinger heads directly to the circle of stones. He feels very calm and takes this as a good sign. He climbs up on the altar and lays back. The mescaline is taking over his thoughts. He starts having visions. He remembers having sex with his beloved Susan. Susan is above him now and he realizes that the oracle has sent her to him.

The gunslinger asks for a prophecy from the oracle, who is disguised as Susan. The oracle resists initially and then tells him to half-sleep. Then the gunslinger hears the prophecy. Three is the number of his fate and it is a mystic number. It stands at the heart of the mantra. The first of the three is young and dark-haired and is possessed by a demon called heroin. The second comes on wheels. Her mind is strong, but her heart is soft. The third is in chains. The man in black is near and he will speak to the gunslinger about the Tower. Jake is the gunslinger's gateway to the man in black and the man in black is the gunslinger's gate to the three. The three will lead him to the Dark Tower. Jake may be spared if the gunslinger ceases his pursuit of the man in black and heads west.





The gunslinger leaves the oracle and heads back to the camp. He sleeps for a long time and the next day he and Jake set out again in pursuit of the man in black. As they camp one night, Jake asks the gunslinger why he is here and why he can't remember his past. The gunslinger tells him he is there because the man in black drew him there and because of the Tower. The Tower, he tells Jake, is a power-nexus in time. Jake does not understand all of this.

Jake asks where the gunslinger comes from and the gunslinger tells him about his land called New Canaan, the land of milk and honey described in the Bible. The gunslinger thinks back about how his land slowly deteriorated and how all those in his life were killed, one by one, until only he was left. His task, sworn by his fathers before him, is to find the man in black and seek revenge. He has been pursuing the man in black for twelve years, since the walls first fell in his land, after the revolution and war that followed it. The only three left from the gunslinger's time are him, the man in black and the Tower.

Jake and the gunslinger continue their climb up the mountain after the man in black. One afternoon, Jake stops and begs the gunslinger to go back. He fears the gunslinger is going to kill him just like the man in black killed him in his world. The gunslinger lies to Jake and tells him that he will not kill him and will protect him. They continue around a curve and come face to face with the man in black.

The gunslinger and the man in black speak and the man in black says that they will meet and have counsel on the other side of the mountain, just the two of them. The man in black disappears into a cleft in the rock from which water is spewing. The gunslinger says that Jake can choose to either come along or stay and then the gunslinger heads toward the falls of water after the man in black. Jake follows.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

The gunslinger realizes that he loves the boy Jake. He goes to the oracle to get answers about the future and he also tries to find a way that Jake can be spared. Given the choice to turn away from his quest or doom Jake, he chooses to continue his pursuit of the man in black, even at the cost of Jake's life.

Something much stronger than love is driving the gunslinger's actions. The reader is given small glimpses into what this might be, via the gunslinger's past as Roland. King refers to the main character as the gunslinger during all dialogs in the present and as Roland during all dialogs in the past. King is trying to convey to the reader that in many ways, these are two different people. Roland has a life and love, responsibility to his heritage and family and even happiness. The gunslinger has only one purpose, to hunt down the man in black, get the information he needs from him about the Tower and then kill him if he can. Everything and everyone else are only secondary players and/or insignificant obstacles to this main goal.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

The gunslinger and Jake continue on in pursuit of the man in black. They find railroad tracks and a handcar. Jake shows the gunslinger how to use the handcar and they both get on and proceed swiftly toward their destination along the rails. As they camp one night, Jake asks the gunslinger about his "coming of age." The gunslinger tells him about it. He was fourteen years old and at least four years away from his final test from his teacher Cort, which would make him a gunslinger like his father.

As the gunslinger leaves his room one day, he passes his mother's apartments. Marten, the enchanter, calls him into his mother's rooms. Marten is Roland's father's right hand man. The enchanter is standing near Roland's mother, dressed too casually, with his hand on her shoulder. His mother is dressed in an informal gown. Marten tells Roland that his mother wants to speak to him, but Roland can tell that she does not. He realizes that Marten has control over his mother and has been using her to betray his father. His father is away at the moment.

His mother is taken off guard when Marten invites Roland into her room. She asks her son a few polite questions about his training. Marten then dismisses Roland. Roland is so angry, though, that he tells Marten in High Speech that his mother has not dismissed him. Marten is thrown off balance and Roland's mother gasps. Roland smiles painfully at Marten, who is controlling his mother and reminds Marten that he serves his father. Marten tells the boy again to go. Roland leaves this time, but he is still smiling a fierce, knowing smile.

Roland immediately goes to Cort's cottage and kicks in the door. He has come for his test. It is four years earlier than usual and two years before Roland's father, the youngest gunslinger ever, passed the test. If Roland fails, he will be forever banished from his home and land. Cort tries to convince Roland to wait, but the boy will not be deterred. Cort tells him to choose his weapon and meet him on the field.

Cort meets Roland in the field. Roland's friends have learned about the test and stand in the sidelines, watching. Roland must take Cort's stick from him. If the boy succeeds, he is deemed a man and a gunslinger. If he does not, he will be banished forever. After a grueling battle between teacher and student, Roland wins the stick from Cort. His teacher is badly injured but amazed at Roland's success. As Cort is about to pass out, he tells Roland that he knows why the boy has come so soon. Cort advises Roland to let the news of his new status precede him to Marten and to wait and grow more before striking. Roland takes his teacher's advice and arranges for Cort's immediate care.

Jake seems to be asleep after the story ends, but he is not. He likens Roland's coming of age to a game and mocks the gunslinger as a grown boy. The two continue on, using the handcar to move ahead. They pass through a band of slow mutants who try to take



Jake into their pits. The gunslinger saves Jake, even though he realizes that this must be where the boy is meant to die before the gunslinger can meet with the man in black.

After some time, Jake and the gunslinger see a light ahead and go toward it on the handcar. Jake tells the gunslinger that they are in a subway station. There are mummified bodies in the station and shops along the long corridor. The gunslinger goes into a weapons shop and takes a bow and arrows. He finds that they are not well made or very accurate, but he keeps them anyway.

The two travelers finally come to a point where they can ride the handcar no longer. They are still underground. The rails and ground are rotting and caving in, so the two must continue on foot. They almost fall through the rotted ground several times before they see a faint light ahead. As they head toward it, the light is blotted out by the man in black. He smiles down at them from above. At the sight of the man in black, Jake stumbles and falls. He barely grabs a handhold, narrowly avoiding the long drop below him. He calls to the gunslinger to help him and the man in black tells the gunslinger to make a choice. The gunslinger can save the boy and the man in black will escape. If the gunslinger leaves the boy, he can follow the man in black for the answers he seeks.

The gunslinger leaves the boy dangling from the edge of the pit below. He follows the man in black outside. The man in black laughs at him and tells him that this is not an end but a beginning. He says that the gunslinger has progressed and admires the gunslinger's abilities. The man in black then tells the gunslinger to come with him to the place of counsel and the gunslinger follows.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

The reader is given more insight into the motivations of the gunslinger. As Roland, he saw his father betrayed by Marten and Roland's mother, who seems to be under Marten's spell. Roland takes the test of manhood very early, driven by the need to confront Marten and put an end to the situation.

The gunslinger tries to think of Jake as only a boy. He does not want to feel any emotional attachment. Jake knows full well that he is a pawn in a game between the man in black and the gunslinger. He grows increasingly quiet during their journey. Jake mocks and challenges the gunslinger, who he previously seemed to worship. Again, this reminds the gunslinger of himself as a young boy. The gunslinger battles with himself over betraying the boy and considers turning west and waiting for the boy to grow older. The gunslinger believes that to delay would mean the death of them both. The gunslinger makes his final choice and leaves Jake to his death, as he follows the man in black to get the answers to his questions.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

The man in black leads the gunslinger to an ancient killing ground. There are bones everywhere of every kind. Joshua trees surround the bowl of the charnel house, a place where the bones of the dead are disposed of. The gunslinger can sense the sea close by. He sees Jake's face in every skull.

The man in black tells the gunslinger to gather wood for a fire and the gunslinger obeys. The man in black magically lights the fire for the gunslinger's amusement and tells him to cook their dinner. He produces a skinned and gutted rabbit from his robes. The gunslinger roasts it on a spit and gives the roasted rabbit to the man in black, taking none for himself. He fears enchanted meat and instead eats the last of the salted meat in his bag.

The man in black removes his hood and the gunslinger is surprised at how young the man in black is. The man in black says that he is nearly immortal. He then takes out a deck of tarot cards and shuffles them. He reads the gunslinger's fortune, drawing seven cards. The last card is Life but does not indicate the gunslinger. The man in black will not tell the gunslinger how Life fits in the pattern of the other cards, since he does not know. He throws the card into the fire and tells the gunslinger to sleep.

As the gunslinger falls asleep, he hears the voice of the man in black. He is loosely quoting the Bible, as he commands: let us have light, land, life and man. The man in black is assembling a universe inside the gunslinger's dream. Then a voice, greater than the man in black's, commands, "Let there be light!" In his dream, the gunslinger is falling into and out of the universe. He begs for it to stop and the man in black tells him it can if the gunslinger gives up his quest for the Tower. The gunslinger refuses and so the visions go on. A primordial light crashes on him and before his consciousness departs he sees something of cosmic importance.

The gunslinger comes back to himself and it is still night. He sits up and the man in black is behind him. The man in black tells the gunslinger that he has done well. If the man in black had given the same vision to Marten, the enchanter would have perished. The gunslinger asks what the vision was and the man in black tells him it was the universe. The man in black says that he broke the gunslinger's father and used Marten to control his mother. The man in black is the furthest minion of the Tower. The man in black wants to know what the gunslinger saw at the end of the vision and the gunslinger realizes that the man in black does not know what the gunslinger saw.

The gunslinger tells the man in black that he saw a purple blade of grass. The man in black explains its significance to the gunslinger. He explains a philosophy of life and the universe and tells the gunslinger that the vision might have been their place in the universe: an atom on a blade of grass. He tells the gunslinger to imagine a place where



all the worlds in the universe meet, like the Tower. Would he dare to enter it? The gunslinger says that one has dared before him to enter the Tower, God. Then the gunslinger asks if he is wrong and the room in the tower is empty. Fear passes over the man in black for the first time at these words. He does not know the answer to this question, nor does he want to.

The man in black tells the gunslinger that this night will be extended for them by his master until all has been discussed, so the gunslinger should ask all he wants to know now. The gunslinger asks who the man in black's master is. The answer is Maerlyn and Maerlyn's master is the Beast and the Keeper of the Tower. The man in black has never met either of them. Maerlyn came to the man in black in a dream many eons ago and told him his destiny. The gunslinger will have to slay Maerlyn before he can ever reach the Tower. The man in black tells the gunslinger that his mind is unlike any other in the history of the world and someone has taken notice.

The gunslinger and the man in black talk all night and the night seems to go on forever. The man in black says that the gunslinger must go to the sea and he will be given the power of the drawing. This is the gunslinger's destiny. He will draw the three and then his real journey will begin. The last thing the man in black says to him is, "Let there be light."

The gunslinger wakes by the pit of the dead campfire and he is ten years older. The man in black's skeleton is before him, shrouded in the rotting black robe. The gunslinger stands, looks around and sees the light. He sees that the light is good. He picks up the man in black's jawbone and puts it in his back pocket.

The gunslinger heads west toward the ocean. As he walks, he says out loud, "I loved you, Jake." He realizes that a great passage of his life had come and gone in that night. In one evening, he is at the shore and he sits on the beach looking out at the setting sun. He sits and waits for the time of the drawing, so that he can proceed to the Tower where he will be confronted with some epic final battle.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

Here the reader is presented with the entire true plot and goal of the book. This was the real quest of the gunslinger, the fulfillment of the desire for enlightenment and the answers to the mystery of the universe. While initially the gunslinger seems only bent on revenge and avenging the honor of his forebears, truly he is searching for the truth of life and the meaning of his own destiny on earth.

The gunslinger has not swayed in his pursuit and it is clear from the ending that the gunslinger has many truths yet to uncover in the future. As the man in black tells him, his journey has just begun and its real import and significance has yet to unfold. The book ends, teasing the reader with hints at the next chapter of the *Dark Tower* series, *The Drawing of the Three*.



# Characters

## The Gunslinger

The gunslinger is a tall, stolid man. His face is weathered and time worn. He carries two guns at his side. They are the guns of his father. The gunslinger is not from the land he now inhabits. His own world has "moved on," and he is now in this new world for the sole purpose of finding a man. The gunslinger is the last of his breed. He is an adventurer and one of a long-gone noble race of men who kept the peace in their land. In his youth, before the world moved on, he was known as Roland Deschain. His father was a gunslinger and so Ronald and others like him were also trained to be gunslingers. The world of his youth has ended, due an enchanter's betrayal of his father and a revolt in the land. The gunslinger pursues the man he believes is responsible for this across time and space for twelve years.

The author describes Roland as not being as bright or quick-witted as some of his contemporaries. His best friend Cuthbert is much brighter, for instance. However, what Roland lacks in sharp wit he makes up for in determination and fortitude. Roland is determined, plodding and enduring. He has some special insight and ability that others high above him on the spiritual plane have noticed. These spiritual others have rewarded the gunslinger's efforts at seeking answers with brief enlightenment and the ability to go on to find the ultimate truth of the meaning of life. This knowledge will be found at the Dark Tower.

## The Man in Black

The man in black is the person being pursued across the desert by the gunslinger. He is mistaken by many to be a priest. The people of Tull think he is an angel of God or some type of powerful religious man. He brings a dead man back to life in the town of Tull. The boy Jake also mistakes the man in black for a priest. The man in black "draws" Jake from his world into that of the gunslinger for the sole purpose of using him for a sacrifice and causing the gunslinger doubt and pain. The man in black has answers that the gunslinger needs about a place called the Dark Tower. He sets traps for the gunslinger along the way, to deter the gunslinger or stop him completely. The man in black is surprised when the gunslinger manages to catch up to him and because the gunslinger catches him, the man in black must tell the gunslinger all he wants to know.

The man in black is never seen full face by the gunslinger until the very end. He wears a hood that covers his face most of the time. The gunslinger is surprised to see that the man is so young and his face is not weathered. The gunslinger expects a much older-looking man. The man in black is Roland's enemy. He was the catalyst for the end of Roland's world and the deaths of those who were close to Roland. The man in black is a near immortal sorcerer who has lived for thousands of years. His master is a man named Maerlyn. Though the man in black explains what he knows about the universe





and the meaning of life to Roland, his knowledge is incomplete. He is also a pawn of some higher powers. When the night of his and Roland's counsel is over, the man in black is mere bones in the pit of death.

## Jake

Jake is a young boy from the future of about the age of nine. His hair is so blond it has turned white in the hot sun of the desert. He solidly built and uncomplaining for someone as young as he is. He is used to being on his own. His own parents had forgotten him in his own world because they were very busy with their own lives. They let their hired help care for Jake. Roland sees in Jake the future makings of a gunslinger. The boy has the strength of character and will to be a strong man one day. Jake cares for the gunslinger when he is near death and collapses at the way station where they meet. He is a resourceful boy and has found means of survival during his short time at the way station. Jake is also wise and thoughtful and has intuition that is beyond his years. He instinctively knows that he does not have to fear the gunslinger, but he gets a bad feeling about the man in black, who also passed the way station. Jake hides when he sees the man in black camping for the night and does not come out until he has gone.

Jake was drawn out of his own world into the world of the gunslinger and the man in black. The man in black intends Jake to be a sacrifice that the gunslinger must give to get the answers he has been seeking for twelve years. The boy is as tenacious as the gunslinger himself and the gunslinger comes to love him, which is what the man in black has intended all along. The gunslinger leaves Jake to die hanging over a pit. Jake loves and respects the gunslinger and is devastated by the betrayal.

## Brown

Brown dwells in the desert. The gunslinger passes Brown's hut in his pursuit of the man in black. Brown is the only person the gunslinger has met in the desert who is not insane or infected with leprosy. The gunslinger likes Brown and wonders if he is a trap set by the man in black to deter him in his pursuit. Brown is a young man. He has a pet crow named Zoltan. He has long strawberry blond hair that reaches nearly to his waist. He has a small corn patch that he vigorously tends to, since it one of his few sources of food. Brown is very wise and unassuming but seems to have strong intuition. The gunslinger unloads his story of Tull to Brown in a strange form of absolution for his guilt.

## Alice

Alice, also known as Allie, is the barkeep of Sheb's, the only restaurant in the town of Tull. Sheb's is a honky-tonk and local watering hole. Alice is a nymphomaniac of sorts. She thinks this demanding sexual urge is a sign of the "change." She is on the brink of menopause. She is described as being a woman who is older but not yet past her prime. She looks as if she might have once been pretty or even beautiful. She has a



scar in the center of forehead that she is very self-conscious about. She wants to have sex with the gunslinger and will not divulge information about the man in black unless he agrees to join her in her room above the bar. She is the first person he kills at the end of his stay in Tull.

## **Nort**

Nort is a man from Tull who is addicted to devil-grass. While most people smoke the weed, he is past that point and chews it. His addiction to the weed has sucked the life force out of him. His teeth are green from chewing and the drool of the chewed grass has left permanent stains down the sides of his mouth. Nort is dead when the man in black reaches Tull. The man in black, posing as an angel of God, brings Nort back to life in a dramatic display during the man's wake in Sheb's. He does this, he says, for Allie the barkeep, since she was obviously fond of him in life and felt he was mistreated by the others in Tull because of his weakness. Nort is crucified in the end by the townspeople of Tull, during their religious frenzy.

## **Sylvia Pittston**

Sylvia is the female preacher of the town of Tull. She lives in the residence of the former preacher. She sermonizes with an attitude of hell fire and brimstone to the townspeople. They are a rapt audience for her admonishments. She is described as being about three hundred pounds. Her eyes are large and dark and her hair is a beautiful shade of brown. Her skin is creamy, smooth and unblemished. The gunslinger has an instant and overwhelming sexual attraction to her and wonders if this is a trap set by the man in black for him. Sylvia is a religious fanatic. She believes that the man in black was an angel of God sent to impregnate her with an angel. The man in black tells her that the gunslinger will come to the town of Tull and that he is the Antichrist. She sets the people of Tull on the gunslinger and they obey her, causing their own demise and utter destruction.

## **Sheb**

Sheb is the owner of the honky-tonk in Tull. He is also the piano player. He had a relationship with Alice before the gunslinger came to town and he attempts to attack them with a knife in her room above the bar. The gunslinger breaks both of Sheb's wrists.

## **Kennerly**

Kennerly owns a stable in town and this is where the gunslinger leaves his mule for Kennerly to look after during his stay. Kennerly is an incestuous and sinister man. He has four daughters. One is full-grown and two are half-grown. The last is but an infant. With the aid of his eldest daughter, Kennerly tries to rob the gunslinger just before the



gunslinger attempts to leave Tull. Kennerly treats his daughter very badly and even though she does his bidding, she is beginning to defy him. Kennerly vacillates between loathing the gunslinger and ingratiating himself to him.



# Objects/Places

## The Dark Tower

This is the place where all universes meet. It is the place that Roland is desperately trying to find and which is guarded by the Beast. Roland follows the man in black to acquire knowledge of the Dark Tower.

## New Canaan

New Canaan is the childhood home of Roland. He was born there, got his training as a gunslinger there and became a gunslinger there. He left New Canaan in pursuit of the man in black.

## Tull

Tull is a town just north of the desert. It is set as a trap by the man in black to kill or delay the gunslinger in his pursuit of him.

## The Oracle

The oracle is an enclosure in the woods at the base of the mountains, or a spirit that inhabits that enclosure. The oracle almost kills Jake, but reveals to the gunslinger a prophecy about his future.

## Devil-Grass

Devil-grass is grass that grows in the flatlands and in the desert. It is addictive and is usually smoked, but sometimes chewed. Nort is killed by his addition to devil-grass.

## The Way Station

An abandoned stopping place for coaches of days of old. It is just before the mountains. It is where the gunslinger finds Jake.

## Zoltan

Brown's pet crow.



## **The Slow Mutants**

Mutated humans who live in the dark reaches of the world and wait to prey on any passerby.

## **The Mountains**

The place that the man in black has fled to at the end of the long desert.

## **Sheb's**

The honky-tonk in the town of Tull where the gunslinger and the man in black both stop to eat at different times.



# Themes

## Revenge

Initially it seems that revenge is the motivating force behind the gunslinger's twelve-year pursuit of the man in black. Early in the story, the reader is not given much information why the gunslinger has this need for revenge. Only the gunslinger's strong feelings of retaliation, anger and unwavering pursuit are described. As the book continues, connections are made between the past and the present which more clearly explain the relationship that the gunslinger has with the man in black and why he feels the need for vengeance.

The man in black is somehow responsible for the end of the gunslinger's world and the death of the people the gunslinger loves. The man in black is directly connected with Marten, the enchanter who betrayed Roland's father by manipulating and controlling his mother. At first, it seems that Marten *is* the man in black, but later it is revealed that he is not. As it turns out, the man in black has "eaten" Marten. Marten was in the man in black's power and under his control at the time of the betrayal. The man in black used Marten to destroy Roland's world. After all, the gunslinger is ultimately correct in his assertion that the man in black was responsible for the end of his world.

The gunslinger seems intent on killing the man in black for what he has done. His need for revenge is undying and dogged. He will stop at nothing to catch the man in black, including killing an entire town of people. His one thought seems to be to find the man and kill him. Even at the end of the story, when the gunslinger needs the man alive to get the answers he requires of him, he shoots at him and attempts to kill him several times. The gunslinger cannot contain his hatred and need for vengeance. When the gunslinger reaches the man in black, his search for vengeance is not over. The man in black has a master and this master has another master, the Beast.

At the end of the story, though, the reader sees that the gunslinger's true quest all along was the attainment of enlightenment and not the pure fulfillment of revenge. He is given some answers by the man in black that allude to long-held philosophies on the meaning of life, the origins of the universe, the creation of the earth and the creation of man. Some of these answers are scientific and some are spiritual. The nature of God is also discussed. Not all the answers lie with the man in black and the ultimate truth can only be found in the Dark Tower.

## Love

There are several different aspects of this emotion throughout the book. Roland's love of Susan, his family and his friends drives the gunslinger across time to capture the man in black. All that he has loved truly and deeply is gone and it is clear that this has taken a heavy toll on him. Although stories of Roland's past do not reveal him as an emotional



man, they do serve to show that he loved several people very much, even if he was not openly demonstrative.

The man the reader meets as the gunslinger is very cold indeed. He seems to have almost no emotion at all. He observes the world and the people he meets with the detached eye of the observer. At one point as he is camping in the desert, though, he describes himself as "a romantic," information about himself that he guards jealously from most other people.

In a detached way, the gunslinger loves Allie, the woman he meets and sleeps with in Tull, but this is more of a sexual lust and fondness, rather than a true deep romantic love. In Roland's flashes of the past, he describes the woman named Susan as being his one true beloved. He still mourns her death. Jake loves and idolizes the gunslinger as he could not love his own father and likewise the gunslinger loves Jake as if he is a son. The two form a strong bond during their journey across the desert and into the mountains.

Ultimately, the gunslinger's love of Jake does not save the boy from his death, although the gunslinger is given the opportunity to prevent it many times. In the end, the gunslinger's love of truth and his desire to reach the Tower wins out over any love he feels for Jake. The reader must wonder what secrets Roland believes the Tower holds for him, if he is willing to sacrifice the boy to reach it.

## Religion

Religion comes into play many times within this book. Religion does not equal spirituality or enlightenment. While the gunslinger seems to be atheistic in manner and personality, he goes to the church in Tull and obviously believes in God. He speaks of God to the man in black as an entity he knows exists. The man in black, a sorcerer, is mistaken as a "priest" by the people of Tull and by the boy Jake.

The religious fervor of the people of Tull becomes their ultimate undoing. They are caught up in the idea of religion but not in the spirit of what living a spiritual life means. Kennerly, the man who keeps the gunslinger's mule, rants and raves in church before the eyes of the preacher, but in his own home he is a sexually, mentally and physically abusive father, a sneak and a cheat.

The people who frequent Sheb's are mostly a decadent, sinful group of people. They are mostly dishonest, brutal and cruel to the helpless. On Sabbath day, though, they all leave the honky-tonk to pray and worship in the small church headed by Sylvia Pittston. They drink heavily, cheat when they can get away with it, lie and steal, but on Sunday they are holy and their sins are absolved.

The people of Tull hide behind religion. Instead of becoming better people themselves, they condemn others. They continue to live sinful lives, but they are easily led by their religion, which does not demand that they change their ways. Their religion only



demands that they attack someone else and they can feel righteous about their aggression. There is no goodness, decency, or kindness in their religion.

King is pointing out that not all religious people are good and not all good people are religious. References to the Bible and figures of the Bible appear throughout the book, both subtle and obvious. The gunslinger's own home country is named after a biblical place called Canaan, the land of milk and honey promised to the Israelites. The man in black tells the gunslinger to gather wood to remember his "Isaac." Isaac, in the Old Testament, was the son of Abraham, whom God commanded Abraham to kill as a test of Abraham's faith. Similarly, the gunslinger must sacrifice Jake, who he loves as a son, as a test of faith and dedication. In the Bible story, God stops Abraham from killing Isaac at the last moment. This leads the reader to wonder whether Jake actually died, or whether he will appear again in the future. Also, according to the Bible, Isaac is the direct ancestor of the Jewish people, who will inherit Canaan. This remark links Jake to the land of Roland's birth.



# Style

## Points of View

This story is told by a third person omniscient narrator. Although the perspective is mainly that of the main character, Roland Deschain, the narrator reveals the thoughts of other characters and tells the reader about events yet to come. For much of the book, however, the views and thoughts of the other characters are revealed through dialog or the thoughts and feelings of Roland himself.

## Setting

The initial setting is the desert, but this is not where the gunslinger begins his journey. He starts in the flatlands and the town of Tull, though these places are not introduced until later in the book, as the gunslinger describes his journey to a man he meets in the desert named Brown. Much of the story takes place in the desert. Other settings include the Town of Tull, Brown's hut, the way station, the mountains, the railroad tracks, the subway station and tunnels, the killing field and the sea. Flashbacks of Roland's childhood are set in Roland's homeland of New Canaan.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this story is simple, American English. However, the text is peppered with archaic, even biblical, language that highlights the importance of religion and mysticism in the narrative. King also refers to a language called the High Speech, which is the language of Roland's world and is used only by those of the high court. The people of lower rank and children in Roland's world speak in what is called the low tongue. This manner of speaking is also used in the future world the gunslinger now inhabits.

## Structure

The narrative structure of this book is unusual. It is broken down into sections for the first two chapters. There are twenty sections in Chapter 1 and three in Chapter 2. After the second chapter, no sections are included in the book. It seems that the amount of information and the way it is presented in this first chapter propelled the author to break it down into smaller, easy to digest parts. The divisions make the reading more interesting and captivating for the reader. As the reader is drawn into the narrative, the chapters become more cohesive, pulling toward the conclusion.

The book is written in a non-linear structure. It begins in the desert and through the telling of the story of Tull, the character's immediate past is revealed. Later, flashbacks reveal more about the gunslinger's past life and about Jake's history.



## Quotes

"The man in black fled across the desert and the gunslinger followed." Chapter 1, section 1, page 11.

"They looked at each other, a sudden depth of feeling between them, the dweller upon his dust-puff-dry ground, the gunslinger on the hardpan that shelved down to the desert." Chapter 1, section 1, page 17

"My name is John Chambers. You can call me Jake." Chapter 2, section 1, page 74

"Poisoned meat. Such a strange way to care for children." Chapter 2, section 2, page 102

"They spoke the low speech, the language of both scullions and squires; the day when they would be allowed to use their own tongue in the presence of others was still far." Chapter 2, section 2, page 96

"Jasmine, rose, honeysuckle, old hay. . .the smell of love." Chapter 3, page 128

"I remember how they danced. My mother and Marten the enchanter. I remember how they danced, revolving slowly together and apart, in the old steps of courtship." Chapter 4, page 151

"I always wondered about growing up. It's mostly lies." Chapter 4, page 158

"But Marten had misunderstood, underestimated. They had been speaking in the low tongue, a parody of informality. But now the boy flashed into High Speech: 'My mother has not yet dismissed me, bondsman!'" Chapter 4, page 161

"Go then. There are other worlds than these." Chapter 4, page 191

"I'm going to tell your future, Roland. Seven cards must e turned, one at a time and placed in conjunction with the others. I've not done this for over three hundred years. And I suspect I've never read one quite like yours." Chapter 5, page 200

"The seventh is Life. . . . But not for you." Chapter 5, page 202

"Let us have light." Chapter 5, page 202

"'Let there be light!' The voice that cried was no longer that of the man in black. It was gigantic, echoing. It filled space and the spaces between spaces." Chapter 5, page 203

"I have an idea of how close to the edge that last pushed you. The Tower will kill you half a world away." Chapter 5, page 205





"You know nothing of me,' the gunslinger said quietly and the smile faded from the other's lips." Chapter 5, page 205

"God has dared. . . . or is the room [in the Tower] empty, seer?" Chapter 5, page 209

"The Tower. Somewhere ahead, it waited for him—the nexus of Time, the nexus of Size." Chapter 5, page 216



## Topics for Discussion

Explain the High Speech and what its meaning is to Roland, the gunslinger, both in his past world in the one he now occupies.

Explain how the High Speech and the low tongue separate the classes in Roland's world.

Is the man in black truly evil or is he simply a pawn that had to take part in Roland's destiny, like Jake or Alice? Use examples from the story to support your answer.

If you were Roland, would you have followed the man in black to get answers about the Tower and, in doing so, sacrificed Jake's life? Would you have stayed and saved Jake from death? Explain your decision.

Name one historical philosopher whose ideas are displayed in the man in black's litany at the end of the book concerning the universe and our place in it.

Who do you think the Beast is? Explain your ideas.

What do you think the Tower signifies?

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