

Ghost Study Guide

Ghost by Jason Reynolds

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Plot Summary

NOTE: The following version of this book was used to create this study guide:
Reynolds, Jason. *Ghost*. First Hardcover Edition. Atheneum/Simon & Schuster, 2016.

Ghost is a young adult novel by Jason Reynolds which follows seventh-grader Castle “Ghost” Cranshaw as he joins a track team and struggles to deal with his past and his present. As a child, Ghost had to flee his apartment with his mother when his father, in a drunken rage, tried to kill them. They took shelter at Mr. Charles’s shop, where Mr. Charles took care of them and called the police, thus saving their lives. Years later, Ghost remains loyal and friendly with Mr. Charles, visiting him daily to buy sunflower seeds. Mr. Charles constantly encourages Ghost like a grandfather, always urging Ghost to do his best and break a world record. Ghost often studies a Guinness Book of World Records, given to him by Mr. Charles.

While visiting the nearby park, Ghost sees a group of kids training for a track team called The Defenders. They are coached by Olympic gold medalist-turned-taxi driver, Coach Otis Brody. No one can seem to beat an albino newbie named Lu, so Ghost decides to race him for fun. Coach tells Ghost that tryouts are already over, but decides to give Ghost a chance. Ghost and Lu race so fast that Coach cannot tell who wins. He invites Ghost to join the team, clearing it with his mother in the process. Coach gets to work with Ghost, warning Ghost to do well on school and on the track. At school, however, Ghost finally loses it with a boy named Brandon Simmons, who consistently picks on Ghost for being poor. Ghost beats him up, and Coach agrees not to tell Ghost’s mom if Ghost gets his act together.

To run better, Ghost cuts off the tops of his high-top sneakers, which earns laughter from everyone at school. Ghost, humiliated and unhappy, flees school and runs to Everything Sports. There, he steals a pair of silver running shoes, and then visits Mr. Charles. He tells Mr. Charles what has happened at school, at which point Mr. Charles tells Ghost to never let anyone demean or belittle his dreams. Ghost then heads to track practice, and begins to bond with his teammates. The day finally arrives for Coach to hand out uniforms, but Ghost does not receive one. Coach tells him this is because Everything Sports has posted a picture of Ghost as a shoplifter on the store window.

When Coach plans to tell Ghost’s mom about the shoplifting, Ghost tells Coach he could not possibly understand what kind of life he has. Coach reveals his own father stole his gold medal to use for drugs which he then overdosed and died from. Coach tells Ghost that Ghost should be using running as a way to move toward what he wants to be in life, not to escape what he is. Coach then decides to help make things right for Ghost, knowing Ghost deserves a second chance. He brings Ghost to Everything Sports, pays for the shoes, and has Ghost apologize in person. With Ghost promising to be better, and now committed to being better, Ghost is permitted a uniform and allowed back. The following day, the first competitive race is held. Ghost is given the honor of participating in the hundred-meter run. As he prepares to race, Ghost thinks about how he is running for his life – not from it, but towards it. It is then that the novel ends.



Chapters 1 – 2

Summary

Chapter 1: World Records – Each day, Castle “Ghost” Cranshaw purchases sunflower seeds from Mr. Charles’s shop near the hospital where Ghost’s mother, Terri, works. Mr. Charles calls his place a country store, even though they live in a city. Mr. Charles, whom Ghost describes as a white James Brown, gives Ghost a Guinness Book of World Records as a gift, and tells Ghost he will one day break a record. Ghost believes he may have already broken a record on most sunflower seeds eaten, and thinks about some of the strange world records that have been achieved – such as Andrew Dahl, who has blown up the most balloons with his nose, or Charlotte Lee, who owns the most rubber ducks in the world. Ghost goes and watches people work out through the window of the gym across the street from the bus stop. He thinks about how his dad also used to eat sunflower seeds, and pretended sunflowers were growing inside of him. He thinks about how his father was an angry alcoholic, going so far as to shoot at Ghost and his mother, prompting Ghost and his mother to flee their apartment in the middle of the night, taking refuge in Mr. Charles’s store. Mr. Charles hid them in his store while he called the police. Ghost reflects on how his father is now serving ten years in prison as he leaves the bus stop and notices a bunch of kids training and running in the park.

Chapter 2: World Record for the Fastest Tryout Ever – Ghost goes to watch the kids running at the track in the park as their coach runs them through exercises. The coach tells the kids assembled that they are part of the Defenders, one of the best youth teams in the city. He tells them that if they continue on in high school and do well, they even have a chance to go to college for free. A white-skinned black boy named Lu asks coach if it is true he was in the Olympics, while the coach tells him not to worry about what he has done, but what Lu can do. The coach then calls on the newbies to show off their skills. Lu runs very fast, while Sunny, a goofy-looking kid, runs a slow but steady pace; and Patina, tall and pretty, runs incredibly fast. One by one, the veteran team members race Lu. However, no one can seem to beat Lu, so Ghost decides to do so. It is then that the coach sees Ghost, and tells him to leave because tryouts were the previous week. Ghost urges coach to blow the whistle, which coach finally relents to doing just to get Ghost out. The two run so fast that the coach cannot tell who has won. Everyone cheers and is amazed.

The coach asks Ghost who he runs for. Ghost says he runs for himself. Ghost introduces himself, then the coach introduces himself as Coach Brody. Coach Brody realizes Ghost has natural talent, but Ghost says he prefers basketball. Coach wants Ghost to run for the team, and Ghost tells Coach his mom will have to approve. Even if she says yes, Ghost says he does not understand the point in running for a team because it is just starting and finishing. Coach tells Ghost that running for the team will actually improve his legs for basketball. Coach convinces Ghost to stay around for the rest of the practice, then drives Ghost home to Glass Manor in a taxi. Coach tells Ghost



he makes a living as a cabbie, but does coaching for the love of it. On the way, they find Ghost's mom, and pick her up. Coach makes his case to her to let Ghost run for the team, saying Ghost has serious potential. Terri worries her son needs to focus on school, but Coach reassures her that he will make sure Ghost always does his school work, will get home safely, and that if Ghost messes up just once at school, he will be off the team. Terri consents, because she says she will at least know where Ghost is after school. Coach then gives both Terri and Ghost his business card.

Analysis

Families can be both a blessing and a curse. This much is clear early in Jason Reynold's novel *Ghost*. Readers are introduced to Castle "Ghost" Cranshaw, a seventh-grade kid who has the nickname "Ghost" for being so fast that it is like he is gone in the blink of an eye. The first time Ghost ever ran like a ghost, was when his father attempted to kill both him and his mother. This near-murder meant that Ghost had to run for his life; it also meant that his father – his family – was a curse. However, Ghost's mother, Terri, is a blessing however; she is utterly devoted to her son, working long hours at the hospital to be able to provide for him and see him through school. Indeed, she does not want her son to end up like her incarcerated husband. Terri tells Coach that Ghost may run track provided he remains focused on his academics, something to which coach readily agrees.

Ghost recounts that he ran as fast as he did not only for his life, but to get away from what it had become. Ghost and his mother took shelter with Mr. Charles, who emerges as something of a grandfatherly figure for Ghost through the course of the novel. Ghost goes out of his way to Mr. Charles's store, not only because he wants to buy sunflower seeds, but because he wants to visit Mr. Charles. Mr. Charles's place is the one place that Ghost actually feels safe. It is the one place he does not feel he has to run from. But, as Reynolds will argue through Coach later in the novel, life is not about running from who you are, but running towards what you will become. It is no coincidence that Ghost should come across the Defenders in practice after finding comfort in his safe place. His life from here on out will be about running towards something better, rather than running away from himself and his past.

The reader should pay special attention to the way that Coach and Mr. Charles appear in Ghost's life; they are masculine examples that are in sharp contrast to Ghost's own father. As such, they are good role models for Ghost to emulate. Ghost is reluctant to join the team at first, but then his competitive nature is awakened. The reader should note especially that Coach tells Ghost he has serious potential – but potential still has to be realized. Ghost will have a lot to learn.

Discussion Question 1

How does the author use the race scene at the park to reveal more to readers about Ghost's character?



Discussion Question 2

Compare Coach's priorities to Ghost's priorities, as revealed in the first two chapters of the novel.

Discussion Question 3

Why is running such a unique, and even heartbreaking part of Ghost's life? How does this affect his running?

Vocabulary

unfazed, sniggering, swagger, hooted, potential, legit



Chapters 3 – 4

Summary

Chapter 3: World Record for the Most Altercations – Ghost reveals he has a long rap sheet at school for fights with other students over insults. Ghost particularly hates Brandon Simmons, who owns the record for most power-hungry seventh-grader at school. Ghost is eating lunch with his friends (Dre Anderson and Red Griffin) when Brandon makes fun of people who live at Glass Manor for being shattered people. He then proceeds to throw one of Monique’s drumsticks at Ghost while saying he is feeding the hungry.

Ghost then beats up Brandon, and is brought before Principal Marshall to explain himself. Ghost explains he was simply pushed to the point that he could not take it anymore, after which Marshall tells him to get his act together. Marshall tells Ghost to call his mom to come get him, but Ghost asks to call his uncle instead. Ghost knows he will get in trouble with his mom, so he calls Coach Bro and pretends Coach is his uncle. Marshall speaks to Coach on the phone and explains that Ghost needs to be picked up, as Ghost has been suspended for the rest of the day.

When Coach picks Ghost up, he lays into Ghost about lying and fighting. Coach tells Ghost that fighting does not make things right. Coach then decides to use the three hours before practice to get Ghost in shape, and familiar with track exercises and training. Coach asks Ghost if he fought Brandon because he was scared, but Ghost tells Coach the only person he is scared of is himself. Coach tells Ghost he cannot run away from himself, and that there is nobody that fast.

Chapter 4: World Record for the Worst Day Ever – Coach asks Ghost who his favorite basketball player is. Ghost explains it is LeBron James, and finds it humorous that Coach likes Michael Jordan. Coach reveals that Jordan is a true champion with six rings to LeBron’s two. Ghost and Coach also talk about their mutual admiration for Usain Bolt, the fastest man in the world. Ghost, cocky, believes he can beat Usain’s 9:58-second time in the 100 meter dash.

No matter what, Ghost cannot beat the time, and Coach orders him back to try again. Ghost asks for a break because he is so tired, but Coach goes on to tell Ghost that Principal Marshall is tired, and that Ghost’s mother is really tired. Ghost realizes he is now being punished for his behavior at school. Coach then has Ghost walk laps to cool down while the rest of the team begins to arrive. There are ten boys and ten girls on the team altogether. Coach then goes through everyone’s names, including Patina “Patty” McNair, Lu Richardson, and Sunny Lancaster. He then introduces Assistant Coach Whit, a woman who looks very young and wears her hair in braids.

When practice begins, Ghost cannot keep up because of his pre-practice practice. Aaron Holmes shares his water with Ghost, and kindly reminds Ghost to bring his own



next time. Lu, however, begins talking smack about Ghost, his shoes, and his performance at practice. Aaron and Mikey Farrar tell Lu and Ghost to chill and to take it out on the track. While racing Lu despite exhaustion, Ghost's shoes come off and he crashes onto track. While recovering on the bench, Ghost is joined by Patty. She reassures him and comforts him as practice ends, telling him he is not the first person to crash, and will not be the last. She tells him not worry about Lu, who is mad because he is an albino. Patty then introduces Ghost to her younger sister, Madison. Patty reveals she and her sister were adopted by a white woman.

Coach, driving Ghost home, tells him not to worry about crashing, that he himself did it back in the day. He tells Ghost not to worry, that tomorrow is a new day and a new chance. At home, Ghost commits to cutting off the tops of his high-top sneakers, so that he can run better.

Analysis

Fears must be faced, Coach contends in this section of the novel. The fight that Ghost has with Brandon has to do with the stress of Ghost's life, and Brandon finally getting to Ghost. Coach, in a very fatherly way, explains that life is not about running from who you are, but running towards what you will become. No one can run away from themselves, Coach explains, so fears have to be faced. Running is not necessarily about escaping, but moving towards something better. Ghost has that chance in his life to change things and become a better person, but this will be totally up to Ghost to follow through. No one can be a man for Ghost: it is something ghost must do himself. As Coach assumes something of a fatherly role in Ghost's life, it is clear that in this case, family is very much a blessing. This is especially true after the incident with Brandon. Ghost and Coach both realize that Ghost has a long way to go on his journey of becoming a better person (which is, in effect, a journey of coming of age).

There is great significance – and great maturity – when Ghost tells Coach he is afraid of himself. In other words, he does not want to end up like his father. He does not want to be anything close to being the same as his father. But not everyone is the same. Ghost does not have to be the same, either. As Ghost comes to practice with the team, he begins to recognize just how truly diverse the team is – from the albino Lu to the tall and pretty Patty (adopted by a white mother) to the wealthy Sunny. Everyone approaches the track and runs for a different reason – but Ghost does not yet know any of these reasons. These things will become apparent in coming chapters, but readers should bear in mind that running track is exposing Ghost to a diverse array of good people. Ghost finds himself longing to fit in among them, but his accident at track – where his shoes come off and he crashes – becomes a source of humiliation for him. His shoes, specifically, become symbolic of that humiliation, and will test his character in coming chapters.



Discussion Question 1

What does Coach mean when he says that life is not about running from who you are, but running toward who you will become? Why does this matter so much with respect to Ghost?

Discussion Question 2

How can Coach and Ghost's relationship be described at this point in the book?

Discussion Question 3

What might Ghost's shoes symbolize? How does he feel about them, and what does he do to them?

Vocabulary

exemplary, altercations, slew, suspension, albino



Chapters 5 – 6

Summary

Chapter 5: World Record for the Most Runaways in a Single Day – While Ghost is happy about his converted high-tops, his legs hurt from all the running at practice the previous day. In Social Studies, Shamika, a large silly girl, begins laughing at Ghost's shoes. The teacher asks Shamika what is so funny, so she points to Ghost's shoes. This causes everyone in class to laugh, and Ghost to be humiliated and angered.

The lunch bell rings, so Ghost takes the opportunity to run away from school to clear his mind. He ends up at Everything Sports, and looks over the running shoe section. He tries on a pair of silver shoes that remind him of wearing bullets. They fit perfectly. He slips them into his backpack and steals them.

Ghost feels strange and scared, so he goes to the place he feels safest – Mr. Charles's store. Mr. Charles wants to know why Ghost is not in school. Ghost explains all about track, his cut-off shoes, and Shamika. Mr. Charles urges Ghost to go back to school, because people will laugh at him all through life and it must be dealt with. Mr. Charles explains he himself is laughed at all the time, even by his family. He tells Ghost never to let anyone call his dreams "little" or demean them. Ghost agrees not to skip school anymore. Still not wanting to leave, Ghost helps Mr. Charles stock the store. Ghost accidentally gets stuck in the stock room, which causes him to remember the night he and his mother fled from his father. It panics Ghost who, when let out, flees the store.

Chapter 6: World Record for the Longest Run After the Most Runaways in a Single Day – Ghost runs all the way to practice, showing up a little late. At practice, Coach informs everyone they will be going on a long run for endurance. Coach sees the new silver shoes that Ghost has, and then begins heading to his cab. Coach follows the runners in his cab, shouting encouragement, advice, and urging the kids to do better. While running, Lu even compliments Ghost on not quitting.

At home, Terri asks Ghost how practice is going. Ghost says it is hard but cool. He explains he likes Coach, and is thrilled to learn his mom also approve of Coach. He and his mom speak about world records, to which Ghost begins revealing strange records – such as most time spent in ice and most nails pulled out of wood with teeth. He worries about his silver shoes, reflecting on how, on the way home, he told Coach his mother bought them for him, and remembers how Coach did not appear to believe him.

Analysis

The shoes which proved to be such a source of humiliation to Ghost now serve to severely test his character. Mocked and scorned for the cut-off high-tops, Ghost runs away from school, runs away from who he is, and runs away from the Coach's advice. Ghost runs to the one safe place he knows, Mr. Charles's shop. There, Mr. Charles is



firm with Ghost about skipping school, but also provides a source of desperately needed comfort when he tells Ghost not to let anyone demean his dreams and the things he loves and wants to do with his life. He must confront his fears. This is critical for Ghost, because it is an important lesson Ghost must learn as he comes of age. This must be taken in conjunction with Coach's explanation that life is not about running from who you are, but running towards what you will become. Ghost will have to drown out the sound of laughter so that he might remain focused on himself and his own dreams. Between Coach and Mr. Charles, both who have become surrogate family members, family proves to be a tremendous blessing to Ghost.

Despite the comfort from Mr. Charles, Ghost does not think twice about the silver shoes he has just stolen – shoes that represent the need to right wrongs, as well as represent irony. Ghost, without thinking about it, has taken one step toward becoming his father. Ghost is no longer moving toward Coach and Mr. Charles, but becoming the very thing which he most fears. Ghost could very easily return the shoes after speaking with Mr. Charles, but he does not do so. Instead, he keeps the shoes and begins to use them at practice, believing they will not only help him run faster, but will prevent him from humiliating himself again. However, by his very desire to avoid humiliation, stealing the shoes will, in future chapters, bring about even worse humiliation.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Ghost steal the silver shoes? Why, even after receiving encouragement from Mr. Charles, does Ghost not return the shoes? What does this suggest about Ghost?

Discussion Question 2

What advice does Mr. Charles give to Ghost? How does this advice affect Ghost?

Discussion Question 3

How is Ghost feeling about his stolen shoes by the end of this section? What does this suggest about him?

Vocabulary

unpredictably, loitering, restocking, teleportation, obstacle course, lunging, tradition, bonding



Chapters 7 – 8

Summary

Chapter 7: World Record for the Best Friday Ever After the Worst Wednesday and Thursday – Ghost always looks forward to the weekends, because his mom is off, and his Aunt Sophie and cousin King come to visit. At school, Ghost tells his friends not to make fun of Brandon. On the way home from school, Ghost swings in to see Mr. Charles to get some sunflower seeds. Mr. Charles asks Ghost if everything is alright. Ghost assures Mr. Charles everything is cool. Mr. Charles is impressed with Ghost being on the Defenders, and tells him he is one of the world's greatest. Ghost heads over to the courts to watch basketball being played. Coach picks up Ghost later for Chinese, a tradition each year where he brings newbies out to dinner. Patty and Lu are already in the cab, and they head to the wealthy side of town to pick up Sunny. Sunny, who has really long legs, crowds Ghost and Lu in the back, while Patty has it easy riding up front.

Chapter 8: World Record for Having the Best Secret – Ghost, Coach, Patty, Lu, and Sunny arrive at the Chinese restaurant. After they place their orders, Coach tells them how proud he is of them, and how proud he is to have them on the team. He then tells them that they must tell each other something about themselves that nobody else knows. Lu explains he wishes he could have a little brother to see what he might look like if he was not albino. Sunny explains his mother died giving birth to him. He explains his mother wanted to win a marathon, but was never able to because of her death, so his father made him run which Sunny hated at first but came to love because it makes him feel like he can connect with his mother. Patty reveals that she knows her biological mother, who had to give her up for adoption because her biological mother got diabetes and had to have both her legs removed. Patty explains she runs for her. Ghost reveals his father is in jail for trying to shoot him and his mother. The four kids ask Coach for his secret, but he will reveal nothing more than that he won a gold medal in the Olympics.

Analysis

Ghost continues his visits with Mr. Charles, who himself continues to provide positive masculine encouragement and support – things Ghost does not have from his own father. Ghost is beginning to recognize that he truly is in control of himself, and that he does not have to lower his expectations of himself. Faced with the knowledge that he will always be laughed at, Ghost encourages his own friends not to laugh at Brandon in school. It is a very mature moment for Ghost, and should be noted by the reader as being a positive step forward in his journey of self-discovery. He is now taking a step away from his own worst fears of himself, and doing something proactive and positive in the world.



Ghost also continues to spend time with Coach, such as when Coach brings Ghost and the other newbies out for a Chinese food dinner – a tradition and a way of ensuring that the team will bond. It is the scene at the Chinese food restaurant that reader should pay special attention to in that the situation truly convinces Ghost that everyone has some kind of pain, and has a different reason for running. Everyone is different, Jason Reynolds argues here, and must be accepted as such. One by one, Ghost learns about the lives of his teammates – the condition of Patty’s biological mother, the death of Sunny’s mother, and Lu’s constant humiliation at being albino. This gives Ghost a healthier respect for himself as well as for others, and is another important step on his journey of coming of age.

Discussion Question 1

At school, Ghost urges his friends not to make fun of Brandon. Why? What does this say about Ghost’s moral character?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Coach’s real reason for bringing Ghost and the other newbies together for dinner? Is he successful in his reasoning? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Although Ghost, Patty, Sunny, and Lu reveal things about themselves, Coach does not reveal much about himself. Why might he do this?

Vocabulary

zombied, spritzes, prearranged, bawked, villain, scoffed



Chapters 9 – 10

Summary

Chapter 9: World Record for Cleaning the Dirtiest Car – By practice on Monday, Ghost has bonded strongly with his teammates. Lighthearted, friendly jokes are shared among one another. But when Curron goes to make jokes about Sunny's mother, Ghost steps in to stop it. Practice goes very well, and Ghost pushes himself harder than ever at Coach's urging. As the weeks pass, Ghost learns the training routine of each day: Mondays are for running hard, Tuesdays are for technique, Wednesdays are for ladders, Thursdays are long-run days, and Fridays are days off. Ghost comes to accept the quirks and character of his teammates.

Uniform day arrives, in which coach finally hands out team uniforms on Technique Tuesday. The uniforms are electric blue with gold lettering and a silver fist clenching a wing. Everyone is excited to receive their uniforms, but Ghost does not receive one. Instead, Coach gives him a paper that says SHOPLIFTER on it. Coach reveals that he saw Ghost's picture taped to the sport store window for stealing the silver shoes. Coach then rips the paper into pieces, and tells him that is his uniform. Coach will not allow Ghost to run, and benches him.

After practice, Coach drives Ghost home, and gets out to tell Ghost's mother what Ghost has done. Ghost begs him not to, saying he his mother does not have much money and so he could not ask her to buy the shoes. Coach says Ghost could have asked him, but Ghost says Coach is not his father and does not know what his life is like. Coach then shows Ghost a tattoo he has of the gold medal he won – a gold medal that his drug-addict father stole to use for drugs that killed him. Coach points to a building a few doors down, and explains that that is where he grew up, and tells Ghost he does know what it is like. Coach explains that he hoped running would be good for Ghost like it was for him, that it would show him he could run toward who he wants to be, not away from what he is. Ghost considers this deeply and begins to cry. Coach says he will not tell Terri this time, but Ghost will have to run in his old shoes, and will have to clean out the cab on Friday.

As the week rolls on toward the first competition, Ghost prepares to participate in the 200 meter race. Friday, Ghost cleans out Coach's cab, and finds an old photo of Coach and his father which Coach is glad has been found. He then brings Ghost to Everything Sports to make up for the theft. Coach pays for the shoes while Ghost apologizes directly for having stolen them.

Chapter 10: Race Day – Ghost's mother calls Aunt Sophie to arrange a time to meet to head to Martin Luther King Park together for the race. Aunt Sophie and King are late, so everyone misses the bus by seconds. On the way, Ghost ducks into Mr. Charles's shop to show off his uniform and Mr. Charles gifts Ghost with a pack of sunflower seeds, wishing him good luck. They shake hands. At the park, Ghost learns he will be handling



the 100 meter race with Lu. Ghost is thrilled and is excited to have the support of his family on the sidelines. Ghost is then stunned to see Brandon in the race as well, running for a team called The Bolts. The runners prepare, and Ghost thinks of having to run for his life when he was younger. The race then begins.

Analysis

At practice, thanks to the dinner and what Ghost learns, he comes to defend Sunny from some unintentionally harmful and unknowing jokes about his mother. However, Ghost cannot defend himself against himself. Coach, when picking up the new uniforms at Everything Sports –uniforms that symbolize team togetherness, unity, and belonging – discovers Ghost is a shoplifter. Because of this, Ghost is initially denied a team uniform. As part of his coming of age, and as part of his running towards who he will be rather than away from what he is, Ghost must right the wrongs he has committed. He travels with Coach to Everything Sports where Coach graciously and kindly pays for the stolen shoes while Ghost apologizes for having stolen them.

Ghost's decision to apologize and man up to his mistakes secures his position on the team once more. The reader should note that Ghost has truly come to feel as if he belongs and has an important purpose among the members of the team. He also comes to feel closer to Coach as well, as Coach finally reveals his own past, a past very much like Ghost's.

There is also a poignant scene the reader should note, where Ghost ducks into Mr. Charles's store to tell him about the coming race. The handshake exchanged between Ghost and Mr. Charles is a sign both of manhood and respect, and is a sign that Ghost has become a young man. It is a sign that Ghost is finally coming into his own and is truly defining his own life and his own future.

As the novel ends, Ghost prepares for his first competitive race. However, the book ends abruptly as the race begins. The ending itself is representative of the idea that no one knows what will come next in life – but that it is up to us each and every moment to decide. At the same time, the reader should note that Ghost imagines himself running for his life – not away from his father and his past, but towards a better life in the future.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Ghost go out of his way to visit Mr. Charles before the race? What occurs during this visit? Why does this matter?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Ghost initially denied a team uniform? How does Ghost manage to earn the uniform and a place back on the team? What does this say about Ghost's character as a person?



Discussion Question 3

Why does the novel end without letting readers know whether Ghost has won the race or not? Why does this matter so much?

Vocabulary

channeled, routine, technique, shoplifter, bailout, sheepishly



Characters

Ghost

Castle “Ghost” Cranshaw is a seventh grader and narrator of the novel *Ghost* by Jason Reynolds. Ghost is very good at running, which started when he had to run for his life with his mother from his violent father when he was younger.

In the present day, Ghost fears himself and fears he may become like his father. Ghost is tapped to join the Defenders track team by Coach Brody. Between the male example of Coach Brody and Mr. Charles, Ghost begins to come of age. He becomes more confident in himself and his abilities, and strives to do the right thing. When he does the wrong thing – such as stealing the silver shoes – he strives to make things right. Ghost comes to realize his life is in his own hands, and it is up to him what happens in the future.

Coach

Otis “Coach” Brody is an Olympic gold medalist, coach of the Defenders youth track team, and is a taxicab driver by day. Coach deeply loves the sport of track, and wants to see the youth of the city have something better in their lives to focus on, so he volunteers to coach. Coach comes to recognize potential and similarity in Ghost, as Ghost, like Coach, has had a difficult life. Coach’s father stole his gold medal to use for drugs that led to his death. Coach does not want to see any of the kids on the team go down the same path, so he ensures to hold them accountable for their actions, responsible for making things right, and making sure to provide a moral example for them.

Mr. Charles

Mr. Charles is an elderly white man who resembles James Brown and who owns a store visited daily by Ghost. Mr. Charles is something of a grandfatherly figure to Ghost, having sheltered Ghost and his mother the night that Ghost’s father tried to kill them. Mr. Charles is a wellspring of support, encouragement, and moral advice that Ghost takes to heart and values deeply.

Terri

Terri Cranshaw is the mother of Ghost. Terri works as a nurse in a hospital in the city, and is utterly devoted to providing for her son. She worries deeply that Ghost may end up like his father, and wants him to remain focused on academics and improving his life. Terri comes to realize that track could be a way for Ghost to do this, so she consents to Ghost running.



Lu

Lu Richardson is an albino black kid who runs track for the Defenders. Lu is very fast, and no one except Ghost can beat him. Lu strives to do his best to avoid having to deal with his appearance, constantly being humiliated that he is an albino. Early in the novel, Lu and Ghost are adversaries on the team, but come to befriend and respect one another by the end of the novel.

Patty

Patina “Patty” McNair is a tall, pretty girl who runs track for the Defenders. Patty is very encouraging and supportive of her teammates, including Ghost when he wipes out. Patty runs track because her biological mother, suffering from diabetes, is unable to do so. At present, Patty and her younger sister, Madison, have been adopted by a white woman whom they also love deeply.

Sunny

Sunny Lancaster is a wealthy kid who runs track for the Defenders and lives on the good side of town. Sunny runs track because his mother ran marathons, but died giving birth to him. Sunny runs because he was at first made to by his father, but now runs because he enjoys it and it helps him to connect to his mother.

Aunt Sophie

Aunt Sophie is the younger sister of Terri, is the mother of King, and is the aunt of Ghost. Aunt Sophie and King visit Ghost and Terri each weekend, and are among the reasons Ghost looks forward to weekends so much. Aunt Sophie is perpetually late wherever she is going, and is even late on the day of Ghost’s first race. This, however, allows Ghost to duck into Mr. Charles’s shop on the way to say hello.

King

King is the son of Sophie, the nephew of Terri, and the cousin of Ghost. King is a good kid who admires Ghost greatly. During Ghost’s first race, King comes to support Ghost, holding a sign that reads “Castle Cranshaw Ain’t No Joke. You Are!”

Ghost's father

Ghost’s father, never seen and never named, is currently serving a ten-year sentence in jail for attempting to murder his wife and Ghost. Ghost’s father, a violent alcoholic, is everything Ghost fears he will one day become. For most of the novel, Ghost is trying to

run away from his father, but ultimately comes to accept he is running towards his own better life, rather than what his life used to be.



Symbols and Symbolism

Sunflower seeds

Sunflower seeds are symbolic of loyalty. Sunflower seeds are sold to Ghost by Mr. Charles at his store, who purchases them every single day for a buck a bag. Ghost purchases the seeds not only because they are his favorite snack food, but because he enjoys visiting Mr. Charles, who sheltered him and his mother from his father many years before. Mr. Charles has become something of a grandfatherly figure to Ghost, and the buying of sunflower seeds is a demonstration of loyalty – of visiting, of talking, of listening, of encouragement, and of support.

Business card

Coach's business card, given each to Ghost and Terri by Coach Brody when Coach asks Terri if Ghost may join the team, symbolizes opportunity. The business cards bears Coach Brody's information and reveals him to be the coach of the Defenders. Coach's openness through the business cards helps convince Terri to allow Ghost to run track, an activity that offers a great deal of opportunity - primarily of personal growth - to Ghost.

Gun

A gun symbolizes both fear, and a reason to run, for Ghost. Some years before the novel, Ghost's father attempted to murder Ghost and his mother with a gun. This in turn led to Ghost's father going to jail. It becomes the source of why Ghost runs so fast - to escape from the life he has lived.

High-tops

High-tops are symbolic both of humiliation for Ghost, and are also a test of character. Ghost, when he joins the Defenders, does not have running shoes, and so must run in his high-tops. They foul him up and cause him to crash on the track when they fall off. At home, Ghost cuts the high-tops down to make running easier, but he is made fun of for this in school the next day. This compels him to run out of school, humiliated, and to steal new running shoes from Everything Sports, sorely testing Ghost's character.

Silver sneakers

Silver sneakers are symbolic of needing to right wrongs. They are also symbolic of irony. Silver sneakers are stolen from Everything Sports by Ghost because he cannot afford them, and because he has been humiliated by his high-tops. Stealing the



sneakers is a wrong that Ghost must eventually right by apologizing for it. The shoes, stolen to avoid humiliation, bring on even greater humiliation when Coach refuses to let Ghost run for the team until things are made right and he apologizes to the manager at the store for sealing the shoes.

Chinese food

The eating of the Chinese food among Coach and the new athletes symbolizes unity and acceptance. It is eaten by Ghost, Coach, Sunny, Lu, and Patty when Coach brings the newbies out for a tradition dinner designed to help the team bond and accept each other. Over this meal Ghost and the others reveal their diverse paths in life which have led them all to run track. Because of this, they recognize each other as being very much human and in need of respect and support.

Uniforms

Defenders uniforms symbolize team unity and acceptance. Electric blue in color with gold writing and a silver hand clenching a wing, the uniforms are handed out to everyone except Ghost. As Coach explains, Ghost does not get a uniform because he has shoplifted and so has defied the moral integrity of the team. Not until Ghost makes things right with the silver shoes does Ghost finally receive a uniform.

Shoplifter photo

A shoplifter photo of Ghost is symbolic of justice needing to be served. The photo is posted on the window at Everything Sports. It is this photo that Coach sees when he goes to the store to pick up the uniforms. Because of the photo and the crime, Ghost is not allowed to run for the team until he makes things right. Making things right brings about justice, and allows Ghost both to clear his conscience and to run.

Handshake

A handshake symbolizes both manhood and respect, and is a sign that Ghost has become a young man. The handshake is exchanged between Ghost and Mr. Charles – who is one of two shining examples Ghost has of manhood in his life – before Ghost's first ever competitive race. The handshake indicates that, as Ghost is his own man now, his life is truly in his own hands – including what he will do with it.

Photograph of Coach and Coach's father

A photograph of Coach and his father symbolizes the relevance of the past. It is discovered by Ghost among Coach's things in the taxicab trunk when Ghost is required to clean out the taxicab as punishment for stealing the silver shoes. The photograph not

only proves Coach's story about his own past, but demonstrates that the past haunts people all their lives. It must be used not as something to run away from, but as something not to run towards.



Settings

Glass Manor

Glass Manor is a very poor neighborhood in the city. It is so poor and dejected that it even earns the derision of other inner city kids, like Brandon Simmons, who asserts only poor, shattered people live there. Glass Manor is where Ghost and his mother live, and is where Coach grew up. It is a place of sadness for Ghost, for it is where his father tried to kill both him and his mother. Coach also finds great difficulty in the area, for it is where his father stole his gold medal to sell for drugs that ended up killing him. However, life in Glass Manor is a reminder to Ghost of the life he does not want, and how he must commit himself to the better life he longs for.

Mr. Charles's country store

Mr. Charles's country store is the general/supermarket store where Mr. Charles works, and is the only real place Ghost feels safe. When Ghost's father tried to kill him and his mother, it was to Mr. Charles's store that they ran and were sheltered by Mr. Charles. Ghost, out of loyalty, friendship, and seeing Mr. Charles as something of a grandfatherly figure, visits the store on a daily basis to buy sunflower seeds and to talk with Mr. Charles. On the way to his first competition, Ghost stops by the store to tell Mr. Charles about it, and it is during this time that they exchange their first real handshake demonstrating Ghost's becoming a young man.

Unidentified park

An unidentified park is visited by Ghost early in the novel, and is located not far from Mr. Charles's store. The unidentified park has a track and is where the Defenders practice and train. It is at this park that Ghost first encounters the Defenders and Coach Brody and races Lu to secure a spot on the team. Ghost spends four days each week at the park training with Coach Brody and the Defenders; it gives him a feeling both of belonging and acceptance he did not have before.

Everything Sports

Everything Sports is a local sporting goods store that Ghost steals a pair of silver running sneakers from. Ghost, unable to afford the shoes and not wanting to be embarrassed at practice, steals them. When Coach goes to purchase uniforms from Everything Sports, he discovers Ghost's picture – and the word "Shoplifter" – on the store window. Coach pays for the stolen shoes, and ensures that Ghost returns to Everything Sports to apologize for having stolen them.



Martin Luther King Park

Martin Luther King Park is a large city park with a track where athletic competitions are held. Martin Luther King Park is where the first competitive race of the track season is held. It is where Ghost, his mother, Aunt Sophie, and King head to in order for Ghost to participate in the race. Martin Luther King Park is where the novel ends as Ghost prepares for his first race ever.



Themes and Motifs

Fears must be faced

Fears must be faced, argues Jason Reynolds in his novel *Ghost*. Fears plague everyone's lives, but they cannot be allowed to weigh one down. Instead, they must be confronted and must be dealt with by each person.

This is said as much by Mr. Charles, who explains his own family makes fun of him for owning a store. Mr. Charles was fearful his store would not last, but it has. Instead of folding and quitting, Mr. Charles has endured to have a successful store, having successfully faced his fears both of failing and his family's mockery.

Ghost takes Mr. Charles's lesson and example to heart by confronting his own worst fears. After being made fun of for his shoes and fearing he may fail at his dreams, *Ghost* returns to track practice with his head held high, determined to run and win. Rather than fearing others may judge him for his life, he opens up about his past at dinner with Coach and the others. Because of this, *Ghost* is accepted among the team and feels like he belongs.

Ghost's greatest fear is that he may turn into his father, and that he may never get beyond Glass Manor. *Ghost* confronts this fear by taking the advice of Coach and Mr. Charles in which he takes responsibility for his own actions (apologizing for stealing the shoes) and not allowing others to laugh at his dreams (or to laugh at others, such as in the case of Brandon). *Ghost* also confronts this fear by getting away from stealing and focusing on track.

Everyone is different and must be accepted as such

Everyone is different and must be accepted as such, argues Jason Reynolds in his novel *Ghost*. Early in the novel, *Ghost* is very skeptical of others, and cannot imagine anyone has had difficult circumstances to deal with in life the way he has. He is also untrusting of how others will react to his situation. However, *Ghost* comes to realize that he is not alone, and that people come from many different backgrounds, all with some kind of pain or challenge, and all must be accepted.

Coach brings *Ghost*, Lu, Patty, and Sunny out to dinner as a newbie tradition - but also because he wants them to get to know one another. Team unity is essential, and unity comes through accepting and respecting differences. *Ghost* comes to recognize this as he learns about his fellow team members not only at dinner, but through the course of the novel.

At first, *Ghost* is condescending towards Lu because of his albinism and because Lu is so cranky towards *Ghost*. However, as *Ghost* learns, Lu is embarrassed all the time about being an albino, and wishes he had a younger brother so that he could see what



he would look like without the albinism. Ghost also comes to learn that Sunny, though wealthy, brings his own heartache to the field. Ghost learns that being wealthy is no reason to dislike someone, and that wealthy people can hurt, too. Sunny's mother died in childbirth with him, and Sunny now runs to connect with his mother.

Ghost also comes to learn that skin color truly does not matter when it comes to family, and that being an adult does not mean one does not suffer. Beyond his grandfatherly relationship with Mr. Charles, Ghost sees that Patty and her younger sister, Madison, have been adopted by a white woman because their biological mother has diabetes and is unable to care for them. Ghost comes to learn that Coach himself still hurts from his younger days when his father stole his Olympic gold medal to buy drugs.

Ghost's journey on the track is also a journey to coming of age

Ghost's journey on the track is also a journey to coming of age, argues Jason Reynolds in his novel *Ghost*. Ghost's decision to commit to running track is not just a journey of bettering himself as a runner, but bettering himself as a person. As Coach says of Ghost early in the novel, Ghost has potential, but he needs the right coach and circumstances to help bring those changes about.

When the novel begins, Ghost is afraid of himself and embarrassed of his situation. He worries he will end up just like his father, and hates that he and his mother were once almost killed by his father. Ghost's choosing to run is initially less about being a better person, and more about avoiding his life as it is. Likewise, Ghost is very sensitive about his life, and the things other say about him deeply hurt him. In so doing, he gets into fights and steals – things that will not help him in life at all and demonstrate a level of immaturity.

Coach and Mr. Charles both set Ghost straight. Mr. Charles explains to Ghost that he must not allow laughter to hurt him or dictate what he does with his life. He tells Ghost not to let anyone else demean or mock his dreams, because they are his dreams and worthwhile. Ghost takes this advice to heart and stops allowing the things others say and laugh at him about to bother him. Indeed, it helps Ghost grow as a person as well, for he actually stops his own friends from laughing at Brandon.

As for Coach, responsibility and accountability are key. When Coach finds that Ghost has stolen from Everything Sports, Ghost is banned from the team until he takes responsibility and is held accountable for his theft. As the same time, Coach reminds Ghost that he cannot use running to run away from his life, but must run toward being something better. Because of this, Ghost becomes a better person and looks forward to the future rather than allowing himself to be dragged down by the past.



Family can be both a blessing and a curse

Family can be both a blessing and a curse argues Jason Reynolds in his novel *Ghost*. Family can offer good things – such as acceptance, belonging, support, love, and compassion – but family can also be deeply hurtful, damaging, or even dangerous. Additionally, good family can be found in unlikely ways and places.

Ghost loves his mother deeply. He knows how hard she works, and how everything she does is ultimately for him. He feels both loved and accepted by his mother. This is in sharp contrast to *Ghost*'s father, who tried to murder them both. *Ghost* and his mother were saved by Mr. Charles, and as such, Mr. Charles has become something of a grandfatherly figure to *Ghost*. *Ghost* visits Mr. Charles everyday not only to buy sunflower seeds, but to talk to Mr. Charles and get advice. In this way, Mr. Charles becomes an unlikely kind of family member, but a welcome one for *Ghost*.

Coach also comes to be another unlikely father-like figure for *Ghost*. Coach, who has been through similar experiences in his own life, is proof that a person's current circumstances do not have to dictate his future. Coach provides a forceful act in responsibility, accountability, and self-determination. It is Coach who holds *Ghost* accountable for his actions, forces him to accept responsibility, and helps *Ghost* to realize that his life is in his own hands. This helps *Ghost* to become a more responsible and mature young man. In so doing, Coach is a surprising form of family that is a blessing.

Family also deeply affects other characters in the novel. Sunny is heartbroken over the death of his mother, and is made to run initially because his father believes he owes it to his mother for what has happened. Sunny now runs because he feels close to his mother because of it. As such, his mother inspires him and is a blessing. Patty's mother is unable to care for her or her sister because of her diabetes, but Patty and her sister have been adopted by a loving white woman whom they are happy to have. As such, both Patty's biological and adoptive mothers are blessings and help her in pursuit of her dreams through track.

Life is not about running from who you are, but running towards what you will become

Life is not about running from who you are, but running towards what you will become, argues Jason Reynolds through the character of Coach Brody in his novel *Ghost*. Coach Brody explains to *Ghost* that running away from oneself will never get someone anywhere, and that there is no one fast enough to run away from himself. Life is not about where one is coming from, but where one is going.

Ghost has much to consider in this respect. *Ghost* is still reeling emotionally from having almost been killed by his father. Only Mr. Charles taking them into his store saved them. *Ghost*'s current situation – living in Glass Manor and having a convict for a father – is

humiliating to him. He worries that he will become his father, and he is afraid of himself because of this. This is why Coach tells Ghost he cannot run away from himself, but should instead run toward what his life should become.

Ghost's journey is full of bumps, mistakes, and accidents, including fights and thefts. Coach remains committed to Ghost, however, helping Ghost to see his mistakes, take responsibility for them, and to do better. For example, when Ghost steals from Everything Sports, Coach pays the shoes off, but also makes Ghost apologize and clean out his taxicab as punishment. By realizing he is becoming what he feared, Ghost is able to do something about it and push on to be a better person.

Ghost himself comes to realize that running offers him a better future. Running will allow him to do things he has not done before. It makes him a part of a team that does not care where he is from or what his past is; they are only concerned with the path ahead. As the novel ends, Ghost prepares for his first race, convinced now that he is running for his life – not in fear of it, but for what his life in the future has in store.

Styles

Point of View

Jason Reynolds tells his novel *Ghost* in the first-person limited-omniscient perspective from the point of view of main character, Ghost. The story being told is that of Ghost and his struggles to avoid becoming like his father, while improving his life in the process through running track. Ghost is allowed to tell his own story in first-person, giving the reader insight into Ghost's thoughts, feelings, and considerations – all things that are available to no other character. Only rarely does Ghost open up about himself or the things he keeps inside, so the first-person offers readers that privileged understanding of Ghost. Because Ghost is telling the story from the first-person perspective, he does not know everything that is going on at any one time. This adds both a sense of realism and suspense. For example, when Ghost is denied his uniform by Coach, he does not know why right away – until Coach informs him it is due to his theft of the silver shoes. The first-person narrative also allows the reader to see firsthand how Ghost changes over time from someone afraid of his own life to someone running for his future life.

Language and Meaning

Jason Reynolds tells his novel *Ghost* in language that is straightforward and reflective of inner city dialectic. This is done primarily because the novel is told in the first-person perspective of main character Ghost, who lives in Glass Manor, one of the poorest and roughest neighborhoods of the city. The use of straightforward and city-dialectic language adds a level of believability to the character of Ghost, and realism to the setting of the novel. In the language used, contractions and certain words are often left out in conversation, with the conversations being very direct. For example, consider Lu's challenge to Ghost in Chapter 2: "Yeah, man, the track is for runners, not for people who want to pretend like they runners" (17). Or consider in Chapter 2, when Ghost himself questions Coach's interest in his running skills: "Why you care?" (21).

Structure

Jason Reynolds divides his novel *Ghost* into ten chapters, arranged in chronological order and numbered from one to ten with each chapter also bearing a title relating to the events of that chapter. Each chapter of the novel deals with a core set of events relating to the overall plot of the novel. For example, Chapter 1 deals with Ghost's past and introduction to running for his life after nearly being killed by his father, while Chapter 10 deals with Ghost preparing for his first competitive race, ever. The titles of each chapter in turn reflect the events of that chapter. For example, Chapter 8: World Record for Having the Best Secret, revolves around Chinese food and Ghost, Patty, Lu, and Sunny revealing something personal about themselves to one another. Each of the chapters' titles, except the tenth, bear the word "Record" somewhere in them, reflecting Ghost's



fascination with records and his own desire to one day break the running speed record of Usain Bolt. Chapter 10 bears only the title “Race Day,” and ends ambiguously with Ghost preparing to step off in the race. This is done to demonstrate that the future of the race, like Ghost’s life, is unknown – but that it is entirely in his hands.



Quotes

He tells me I can set a record one day. A real record. Be one of the world's great somethings. Maybe.

-- Ghost (Chapter 1)

Importance: Early in the novel, the grandfatherly relationship that Ghost has with Mr. Charles is highlighted. It was Mr. Charles who first turned Ghost onto world records with a gift of a Guinness Book of World Records. Mr. Charles encourages Ghost, telling him that he will one day set his own world record. Ghost is not entirely convinced, but considers the idea he might just set a record one day - and at the very least, improve his life.

And I think he's got potential. With the proper coaching, he could be a serious problem.

-- Coach Brody (Chapter 2)

Importance: When Ghost sits in on and then runs in a practice, Coach Brody is stunned and impressed. He wants Ghost to be on the team, but Ghost says Coach will have to ask his mother first. Coach does just that, and makes the case to Terri. He explains Ghost has serious potential but needs coaching to see that potential through.

Well, at least I know where he'll be after school.

-- Terri (Chapter 2)

Importance: After Coach makes his case for Ghost running on the team, Terri agrees to let Ghost join. She knows her son needs guidance and a place to be after school. She also knows he needs a physical outlet. She agrees in large part because his joining a team means that she will know where he is after school each day. This will help put her mind at ease.

So I guess... I guess the only other person I'm really scared of, maybe... is me.

-- Ghost (Chapter 3)

Importance: When Coach picks Ghost up from school for fighting Brandon, Coach asks Ghost if he fights to prove he is tough. Ghost explains he has to be afraid of somebody to prove he is tough. He explains the only person he is afraid of is himself. In other words, Ghost worries he may end up like his father and end up being no good.

Trouble is, you can't run away from yourself... Unfortunately... ain't nobody that fast.

-- Coach Brody (Chapter 3)

Importance: Coach takes to heart Ghost's fears of himself. Coach knows that Ghost worries about going nowhere in life, and being afraid of his own true potential – and possible failure. Coach knows this sort of fear is not something that someone can run away from. Instead, this fear must be confronted. He intends to help Ghost confront his fear.



No, no. You know who's really tired? Your mother. She's so tired. So tired.
-- Coach Brody (Chapter 4)

Importance: When Coach must pick Ghost up from school for fighting, he brings Ghost to do extra practice before practice officially starts. He makes Ghost run the 100-meter over and over. Ghost says he is tired, but Coach makes a point by saying his mother is tired of Ghost's behavior. Coach is helping Ghost realize there are painful consequences for others to his actions.

Don't ever let someone call your life, your dreams, little. Hear me?
-- Mr. Charles (Chapter 5)

Importance: When Ghost seeks comfort at Mr. Charles's store, he explains to Mr. Charles why he has skipped school. He is tired of everyone laughing at him. Mr. Charles tells Ghost not to mind the laughter of others, because it will constant throughout life. Instead, Mr. Charles tells Ghost to believe in himself, and to never let anyone else call his dreams or his life small. In other words, Ghost is worth far more than he gives himself credit for. Mr. Charles can see the good in him.

And it seemed like everybody at the table cared and didn't care at the same time. And that made me feel, for the first time, like I was one of them.
-- Ghost (Chapter 8)

Importance: At the Chinese food restaurant for newbies dinner, Coach has Ghost, Patty, Sunny, and Lu reveal something personal about themselves in order to help them bond with one another. Ghost reveals how his father tried to kill both him and his mother. Ghost realizes that no one judges him or makes fun of him for this. Instead, while they demonstrate care out of concern for Ghost, they do not care that Ghost has had a difficult life, and do not hold this against him. As a result, Ghost feels accepted among them.

I went to go pick up the uniforms at the sporting goods store, and guess whose photo was taped to the window?
-- Coach (Chapter 9)

Importance: On uniform day, Ghost is stunned when Coach does not give him a uniform. Coach explains this is because Ghost is no longer allowed to run. He found Ghost's picture on the store window, indicating Ghost is a shoplifter. Coach will not tolerate this, and Ghost realizes he has messed up bad.

So don't tell me what I know and don't know, Ghost.
-- Coach (Chapter 9)

Importance: When Coach learns that Ghost has shoplifted, he determines to tell Ghost's mom what has happened. Ghost begs him not to, telling Coach he cannot understand what his life has been like. Coach reveals his own father stole his Olympic gold medal for drugs he overdosed on, and grew up in the same neighborhood as



Ghost. He tells Ghost not to make assumptions, and knows firsthand what it is like to grow up in in difficult circumstances.

Show you that you can't run away from who you are, but what you can do is run toward who you want to be.

-- Coach (Chapter 9)

Importance: Coach explains to Ghost that he had hoped running would be therapeutic and beneficial to Ghost the way it was for him. He explains that he hoped running would help Ghost move toward being who he wants to be, not help him to run away from what he is. Ghost comes to understand this and takes Coach's thoughts to heart from thereon out.

Rested my weight on my arms. Closed my eyes. Thought of us running to the door. Running for our lives.

-- Ghost (Chapter 10)

Importance: As the novel ends, Ghost prepares for his first competitive race ever. Although the outcome is not known, what is known is that Ghost is now running towards a better future. He recalls having to flee his drunken, murderous father and run for his life. Ghost now realizes he is not running away from his life as it is, but running towards a better life. He is indeed running for his life.