

Hollow City Study Guide

Hollow City by Ransom Riggs

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Plot Summary

Hollow City, by Ransom Riggs, follows Jacob Portman, a peculiar whose talent allows him to sense hollowgasts, the monsters that hunt peculiar children. With this power, Jacob and a group of peculiars travel from Wales to London through the war torn country of England searching for a cure for their ymbryne who is trapped in the form of a falcon. Although Jacob grew up in modernday Florida, through the time manipulating power of the peculiar children's protectors, he ends up in 1940 England during the height of Germany's aggression. Despite their efforts, the wights and the hollowgasts capture all of peculiar children save Jacob and Emma, the girl with whom Jacob falls in love.

The book, as the second in the series, picks up just after the wights have ransacked Miss Peregrine's time loop. The monsters captured the children's caretaker ymbryne, but the kids rescued Miss Peregrine from the wights. The book begins with the children paddling through the sea between Wales and England while the wights pursue them in submarines. Although they were able to rescue Miss Peregrine, she remains stuck in the form of a peregrine falcon. After the children land in England, they flee through the countryside with the wights in pursuit until they stumble upon an untouched and uncorrupted time loop by following clues from the Tales of the Peculiar, a tome that children bring with them.

Even though the time loop's ymbryne, Miss Wren, was searching for her sisters in London, peculiar animals greet them and direct the children to London where the animals suspect the wights hold the ymbrynes. Jacob, with his power to sense hollows, and the other children manage to kill a hollow then head towards London. On their way to the capital, they run into a band of gypsies that eventually shelter them from the wights because both peculiars and gypsies are outsiders. When the children leave the camp to board a train to London, the wights capture them along with the gypsies that welcomed them the night before. Mr. White, the wight in charge, tortures the gypsies in front of the children until Hugh, the bee controlling peculiar, unleashes a swarm upon the wights that kill all 6 of them. Since only another ymbryne can alleviate Miss Peregrine's condition, they hurry on to London by train.

The bombed capital offers even more dangers than the countryside. Consulting the Tales again, the kids read a passage called the Pigeons of St. Paul's which describes the peculiar animals that reside at the renowned cathedral. Knowing that Miss Wren has an affinity for peculiar animals, they find the pigeons in a ruined time loop below the cathedral. In this same time loop, they find peculiar children who hide from two hollows that then chase the entire group back into 1940 London. After hiding in a random house while the Germans bomb the city, the kids flee the house when the wights find them just as a mine strikes the building and destroys the two hollows. Following a peculiar pigeon that Melina, a telekinetic from the ruined time loop, befriended, the group descend into the subways where they find a time loop that leads the children to a circus. While wandering the circus, a peculiar boy directs them to a building that is frozen by ice despite the warm weather. Outside this building, they find Miss Wren who leads them



inside the peculiar headquarters of the frozen edifice that prevents wights from entering. During Miss Peregrine's healing at the hands of Miss Wren, Millard, an invisible scholar, discovers that the wights extract peculiar souls then consume them in order to pass through time loops.

With this knowledge, the group gathers around Miss Peregrine and Miss Wren for the final moments of Miss Peregrine's transformation. Instead of their kind caretaker, Caul Peregrine, Miss Peregrine's wight brother, emerges from the falcon form. The children realize that they took the wrong falcon from the submarine. Caul and his fellow wights kidnap the peculiars then take them into a subway station time loop in the present. Here, the peculiars resist their captors and, in the confusion, Jacob and Emma escape only to have a hollow attack them. Jacob who speaks to his father on the telephone, drops his cell then speaks to the hollow in the monster's own language. The beast submits to Jacob's newly found peculiar power and the novel ends.



Chapters 1 - 3

Summary

Hollow City by Ransom Riggs is the story of a group of children who possess peculiar powers. Throughout the novel, monsters called wights and hollowgasts chase the children in order to steal their powers. Jacob Portman, the story's protagonist, inherits his grandfather's power of seeing and controlling hollowgasts. With this power he helps the other children evade the hollowgasts and their masters, the wights.

The second novel of the Miss Peregrine's Peculiar Children series began in 1940 Wales just after Jacob and the rest of the child peculiars escaped from their home in Wales. In three boats, the group rowed out of Cairnholm towards the English coast while the human-shaped wights chased them in German submarines. Soon a fog covered the sea and storm waves battered the superstrong Bronwyn and the lighter-than-air Olive out of their boat. After the storm cleared, Jacob and his friends found Bronwyn and pulled Olive down from the sky by a harness. Still stuck in the fog, the group sent Olive into the air to act as a navigator so the peculiars could find their way to shore.

In Chapter 2, the children landed on shore only to spot a pair of miniature zeppelins scanning the coast for the peculiars. The kids hurriedly dragged their boats into a nearby cave and the invisible boy named Millard covered their tracks. In the cave, the group decided they must find a way to transform their headmistress, Miss Peregrine, out of her falcon form and back into a human. The only way to achieve this transformation was to find a ymbryne that the wights had not captured. In order to avoid the danger of searching for a ymbryne in hollowgast infested, war torn England, the group had to rely upon Jacob's talent of sensing these invisible monsters. Seeing Jacob overwhelmed by the responsibility, Emma, a girl who can create fire with her hands, comforted him saying that Jacob was even stronger than his hollowgast-killing grandfather who had the same power as Jacob. While talking outside the cave, the zeppelins found the pair. As the children fled, Wights landed on the beach with dogs.

Chapter 3 began with the group hiding in a shelter that Fiona created by using her talent to coax a tree's branches to cover them. Claire, the youngest of the children cried until Bronwyn read from the Tales of the Peculiar, a volume she kept in her massive trunk. Bronwyn read that once upon a peculiar time, animals roamed through an ancient forest, but hunters killed them and mounted them on walls. A friendly giant named Cuthbert lifted the animals onto a mountain to save them from the hunters. In exchange, the animals promised to talk to the lonely giant. Soon, a witch, hired by the family of a dead hunter, turned the giant to stone while he was bathing in a lake. He sank until only his stone head was above the water. Petrified, the giant called to the animals pleading them to come down and talk to him, but they refused saying that the hunters would kill them.



After the depressing story, the children fell asleep. They woke the next day and ate congealed meat fat from a rusted tin in Bronwyn's trunk. Unable to get their bearings, the group wandered the woods until they came to a body of water that they initially mistook for the sea, but found that it was a lake with a weathered rock that resembled a face. Claire exclaimed that it was Cuthbert and that the Tales of the Peculiar must be true. Emma and Jacob discovered that in the giant's mouth was the entrance to a time loop, a temporal haven created by a ymbryne in order to protect peculiar children. The kids entered the loop and began to climb the mountain. Soon Jacob spotted a hollow that proceeded to chase them up the mountain. Bronwyn picked up a boulder and Jacob, the only one able to see the hollow, directed her to throw it at exactly the right time. With the hollow crushed, the children found the ymbryne's home where Cuthbert's peculiar animal friends lived. After meeting Grunt, an odd half-dog, half-man, Addison MacHenry, a talking bulldog, greeted them and invited them into the home where the children learned that Miss Wren, the loop's ymbryne, was in London searching for her captured sister ymbrynes.

Analysis

Ransom Riggs's story begins in *medias res*, in the middle of things. Riggs presumes, justifiably, that the reader has read the first book of the Miss Peregrine's Peculiar Children series. Conscious of the fact that *Hollow City* is a sequel though and not a simple continuation of the first novel of the series, Riggs establishes both character and setting. The children row away from "the rutted coast of mainland Wales." This quote from the novel's first paragraph immediately gives readers who may be new to the series a location that Riggs quickly expands by establishing the novel's major time period of 1940. Even if the reader did not know the significance of World War II Great Britain in 1940, Riggs, in a concession to the adolescent reader genre in which he writes, delves into the second World War's impact on the country.

As is true of all well-written books, the novel's first sentence reveals the book's preoccupations and establishes the reader's place in relation to the story's characters. Chapter 1 begins with the words "we rowed out through the harbor." From the first word, "we", Riggs establishes the narrator as a first-person character. It is through Jacob Portman's eyes that the reader experiences the story. Consequently, the word "we" carries a sense of inclusion with it. While Jacob means 'we' as in himself and the other peculiar children, 'we' can also include the reader. This plural first person pronoun has no antecedent, thus the word is ambiguous and open to interpretation.

Later in this same sentence, the reader finds out how other characters in the book react to the strange children. As the group slips past fisherman who "lowered their nets to stare frozenly", the dichotomy between the children and the outside world becomes apparent. The children are strange and other characters, namely adults, notice their peculiarities instinctually. The final point to take away from this significance-filled opening sentence is the sense of danger that will drive the action forward. The sentence ends with Jacob noting that the children appeared like a "procession of waterborne



ghosts, or ghosts soon to be." Mortal danger lurks over the children as they attempt to evade the wights and cure Miss Peregrine of his forced transformation.

Besides establishing the setting and the heroes of the tale, Section 1 also portrays each character's mindset. The strong girl, Bronwyn, is the mother of the pack. Jacob is the new kid and Emma is his love interest whose passion inspires the group when they are depressed. Enoch, the necromancer, is constantly critical while the invisible boy Millard is the scholar. After these main characters, the other children are mentioned far less. Because the initial cast of characters is so large, of necessity, each person becomes something of an archetype. Throughout the story, these characters remain flat, one dimensional beings whose dominant and unchanging personality traits define them. The only exception to this string of flat characters is Jacob, the protagonist. In this first section, he is simply a scared newcomer trying to live up to his grandfather's legacy of being a hollow-killing machine.

In Chapter 3, Riggs gives the reader their first glance at the Tales of the Peculiar when Bronwyn reads the story of Cuthbert and the animals in order to calm the terrified children. Miss Peregrine, locked in her peregrine falcon bird-form, uses her beak to open the book to a "seemingly random chapter." This random chapter is not, in fact, random at all because in Chapter 4, the group finds Cuthbert's ossified head and climb down his throat to enter Miss Wren's time loop filled with peculiar animals. Through Miss Peregrine, the author avoids a *deus ex machina*, literally the god of the machine, moment. Rather than inventing an unbelievable plot point, Riggs uses the Tales of the Peculiar to push the action forward. When Miss Peregrine opens to a "seemingly random chapter", Riggs, through Jacob's narration, hints that the chapter may not be random at all. The conspicuous adverb, "seemingly", is an instance of subtle foreshadowing. While most readers may not pick up on the significance of the word, those who do realize its importance earn a glimpse into the story's future.

The major character insight of this section is Jacob's fixation with living up to his grandfather's legacy. Abraham Portman, Jacob's peculiar grandfather, was involved with Emma. Emma, like the other children of Miss Peregrine's brood, has not aged for almost 100 years because of the protection of Miss Peregrine's time loop. Without recognizing that he is following in his grandfather's footsteps, Jacob becomes involved with Emma as well. Not only does he fall in love with the same girl his grandfather did, he also has the same peculiar power that his grandfather had, the power to see and manipulate hollows. While the reader may notice the parallels, in his self-deprecation, Jacob cannot and, with the help of Enoch's derision, feels that he cannot compare to his grandfather.

Discussion Question 1

How is the story of Miss Peregrine's peculiar children similar to one of the stories from the Tales of the Peculiar? What is the significance of this similarity?



Discussion Question 2

How does Emma feel about Jacob? Are her feelings a way of recapturing what she had with Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, or are they genuine?

Discussion Question 3

What is the function of humor in this section?

Vocabulary

waterborne, craggy, memento, galley, zeppelin, increments, hull, pacify, roam, appalled, miracle, thicket, uncanny, coincidence, annotate, appellation, menagerie, inauspicious, viscous, denominated



Chapters 4 - 5

Summary

In Chapter 4, Jacob and the children entered the home of the ymbryne, Miss Wren, to find a number of peculiar animals including Addison, the talking bulldog, and Dierdre, the talking emu-raffe. Addison, clearly in charge, introduced them to the Armageddon chickens whose eggs explode and an owl that was once a ymbryne who stayed in bird form too long and became stuck. The kids feared the same would happen to their own ymbryne, the beloved Miss Peregrine. Addison told them that unless they found Miss Wren who went to London to free her sisters, Miss Peregrine would be stuck as a falcon and lose her humanity within two days. Emma stormed out of the room and Jacob followed to console her. The two kissed then returned to tell the other children that they were headed to London to find Miss Wren. Since Claire was sick with a fever, Fiona volunteered to stay with her and the others left Miss Wren's time loop.

Chapter 5 began with the children climbing out of Cuthbert the giant's stone throat and back into 1940, war torn England. The kids wandered through the forest until they came upon a road where a Gypsy's caravan rode past them. The kids leapt onto the sides of one of the wagons and hitched a ride until the Gypsies stopped and ambushed the children. They demanded to know who the children were and where their elders were. Emma and the children lied as calmly as they could, but the Gypsy leader was unconvinced. The Gypsies forced the kids into a cage afraid that the children might be witches after they saw Hugh cough up a bee. Rather than fighting the group, the kids allowed the Gypsies to lock them in the cage. A Gypsy boy wandered over to the cage to taunt the children while Millard, the invisible boy, stole the key to the cage. The boy, named Galbi, screamed when he heard Millard's voice and Bronwyn covered his mouth through the cage bars.

When the other Gypsies ran over to save Galbi, the Peculiars displayed their powers in the hopes of intimidating their captors. After the ruckus, everyone paused hearing the rumble of motors. Two Gypsy men threw a tarp over the cage and a group of wights, monsters who could disguise themselves as humans, began asking about a group of children. The wights, posing as soldiers, searched the camp until one of them moved towards the cage when his dog started barking. A Gypsy man stopped the wight from pulling the tarp off the cage saying that a starving bear was caged there. Then, the roar of a giant bear came from the cage and the soldier leapt away. After a few more minutes of searching the camp, the wights drove away and the Gypsy leader introduced himself as Bekhir Bekhmanatov and asked why the children did not say that they were syndrigasti, an old word for Peculiars.

Bekhir apologized for the way he had treated them and the Gypsies celebrated their company with a feast. Bekhir revealed that his own son was peculiar as well; the boy was rapidly vanishing just like Millard. As the party wound down, Millard told Jacob and Emma that Bekhir's son wanted to go with the peculiars, but they refused the boy. The



next morning, the Gypsies took the children to the nearest train station on horseback. Bekhir's son had snuck along for the ride and again urged the children to take him, but they refused again saying that the boy belonged with his family and that they would come back to him one day.

Analysis

Section 2 witnesses the group's brief rest in Miss Wren's time loop. In Chapter 4, this rest offers the group a chance to recuperate and regroup, if only for a short time. While the scene itself functions as a situation for Riggs to be humorous with the peculiar animals, its true importance lies in the scene's function in regards to the novel as a whole. The novel's structure centers around the children's haphazard attempt to rescue their ymbryne, Miss Peregrine, from being stuck in her falcon form and losing her humanity. Even though these stakes are high, this challenge does not push the plot forward. It is the wights and the hollowgasts who offer Riggs a quickly paced story. As the monsters, they chase the children and, both physically and literarily, push the kids forward.

On top of offering the peculiars a respite from their constant running, Miss Wren's time loop provides the reader with a break from the cat and mouse game that plagues the story's development. In this way, Chapter 4 represents Riggs's manipulation of the novel's pacing. Rather than writing a story of incessant chasing, he gives his characters a moment of rest in order to develop their relationships.

The most important relationship that the author develops in this section is the one between Jacob and Emma. It is here that the two kiss for the first time in the novel and also where the reader sees Jacob reveal his insecurities to Emma and, after hearing Jacob's doubts and reassuring him, Emma shares her own dilemmas. While the other children remain flat characters, Riggs fleshes them out with minor details that add to the story's general atmosphere. For instance, before the kids leave Fiona and Claire at Miss Wren's, Hugh, the bee boy, embraces Fiona and the two put their heads together while the other children are watching.

These romantic moments remind the reader that Miss Peregrine's children are far more mature and far more peculiar than other children. They had lived in Miss Peregrine's time loop for about 100 years each. While they appear to be kids, they are all centenarians stuck in adolescent bodies. This thought also touches on the novel's major theme of what seems to be and what actually is. In other words, appearance is different from reality.

When the children leave Miss Wren's time loop and their ears pop, Jacob remarks that "it's like an airplane taking off" and Horace says that he has never flown in an airplane. Offering a different example, Jacob says it's also like "when you're on the highway and someone rolls down a window". Olive asks, "what's a highway?" Although the reader is familiar with Jacob's references, the book's other characters, due to their isolated



upbringing, are not. This style of humor permeates the text. Just as Riggs gives a break from the plot's suspense, he also breaks up tension with humor.

The most profound moment of realization in this section occurs in Chapter 5 at the Gypsy's campfire celebration. While the others partake in the festivities, Jacob detaches from the proceedings and broods over his situation. After leaving modern day Florida and entering Miss Peregrine's time loop, Jacob's world has changed. He narrates, "in reaching toward Emma, I'd risked everything...but in doing so I had grasped and pulled myself into a world once unimaginable to me." Emma is Jacob's center. All of his actions result from his feelings for Emma. The result is that Jacob loses a bit of himself in the process of grasping for Emma and immersing himself in her world. Section 2 marks Jacob's attempt to cut out a piece of Peculiardom for himself and reestablish his identity as a peculiar.

Discussion Question 1

What effect do the other peculiar children - Emma in particular - have upon Jacob?

Discussion Question 2

What stereotypes about Gypsies does Riggs both perpetuate and renounce?

Discussion Question 3

While the wights and hollows are very rarely physically present in the story, they play an important role throughout the book. What function do the monsters serve in the book's overall plot?

Vocabulary

peculiar, splintered, wolfed, unfazed, jubilant, plateau, loping, bizarre, rapt, inspiring, sugarcoat, impervious, speckle, collateral, discriminating, yowled, omnibus, seized, towheaded, bluntly



Chapter 6 - 7

Summary

The Gypsies dropped the children off at the railroad station in the town of Coal. After Horace slapped a fat wad of bills, that he brought from Cairnholm, down on the train clerk's counter, the man gave the children an entire first class car headed to London. The train conductor finally let the children board the train after they convinced him that their falcon, Miss Peregrine, was a toy. Just before they boarded, a gunshot rang out and a group of uniformed soldiers, wights as they children could tell by their lack of pupils, captured all of them except Hugh who managed to hide. The soldiers walked their hostages past three dead Gypsy horses and into a farmhouse surrounded by a beautiful field of wildflowers.

The wight in charge, named Mr. White, ushered them into the house to see Bekhir and his men bruised and bleeding on the floor. Mr. White interrogated the children and the men and when Bekhir lied to protect the children, he calmly stabbed Bekhir through the thigh. Despite Mr. White's pressure, the children toyed with him until he was furious. Equally angry, Emma's hands lined with flame as she prepared to attack the soldiers, but suddenly a gunshot from outside the farmhouse startled everyone. Thousands of bees burst into the farmhouse after Bekhir punched a hole in the window to allow the insects in. Hugh saved the group by killing all six wights with his bees. After escaping the wights, Jacob drove the kids to the train's next stop in the dead soldiers' jeep. The weary conductor allowed the kids back on the train saying that both Bronwyn's trunk and Miss Peregrine were still aboard.

Chapter 7 began with Jacob's nightmares as he slept on the train. He saw his three fat uncles and the rest of his family peering into his grave back in Florida. He bolted awake to find Millard and Emma's concerned faces staring at him. Millard, studying the apparently true Tales of the Peculiar, told Jacob about the children's peculiar nature. He said that peculiarness is a second soul of sorts and that the hollowgasts evolve into wights only after they have eaten enough peculiar souls. Millard then went on to lecture Jacob on the origin of peculiarity. He said that all modern peculiars were descended from a small group of powerful giants who were respected as gods.

As the train pushed towards London, each peculiar child gave their origin story. Enoch had raised the dead in his father's funeral parlour. Bronwyn had snapped her abusive stepfather's neck at 10 years old. Horace had dreamt of the Lusitania's sinking a day before it happened. Hugh had eaten a honeycomb along with a bee as a child. Everyone told their stories except Emma who stormed away. Jacob went to her and Emma told him that when she started manifesting her powers at 10, she kept burning through her mattresses. Her mother abandoned Emma because she thought her daughter was a demon and her father beat her and tied her down in asbestos sheets. One day, her sister freed her and Emma eventually found Miss Peregrine. Then, the train arrived in London.



Analysis

The major villain in Section 3 is the sadistic wight called Mr. White. Finally, Riggs puts a name and a face to the children's adversaries. While this figure is only a temporary villain because Hugh quickly kills him, Mr. White is the first wight that actually has a personality. The hollowgasts do not speak and the other wights the children have come across in this novel seem to be limited in their intellectual capacity. Not only does Mr. White's introduction give the reader a sense of what the children must face, he offers the characters an opportunity to act heroic. What is a villain if not an obstacle for the hero to act heroically and overcome? Each child stands up to Mr. White's questioning and near-torture demonstrating the kids' loyalty to one and other. While Enoch and the rest may bicker ceaselessly when the children are alone, they form a united front in opposition of the wights.

Mr. White's name serves his most important function for the story. Nomenclature, naming, is monstrously important in the novel. Riggs does not name his characters arbitrarily; rather, he deliberately gives each one a name that suits their personalities and reveals something about them that the characters themselves may not understand. Riggs also uses names for humor. For instance, Mr. White is a wight. The words "white" and "wight" are homonyms that underscore the irony of Riggs's naming system. The wights are not white. They are evil monsters attempting to consume children's souls. Giving Mr. White his ironic name is the most obvious instance of the author giving importance to his words. To drive his point home, Riggs even has Jacob narrate internally, "Mr. White. A joke, maybe? Nothing about him seemed genuine; that least of all."

In Chapter 7, Millard discovers something about the Tales of the Peculiar that speaks to both Riggs's novel and to the fictional world of Peculiardom. The Tales of the Peculiar prove themselves to be true. After climbing down Cuthbert the stone giant's throat and into Miss Wren's time loop, the children begin to see the Tales as more useful than they previously imagined. Rather than being simple children's stories, the group, Millard in particular, realize that there is truth to be found in children's stories.

Millard wonders, "to think I once dismissed these as just stories for children. They are, in fact, extraordinarily complex." Through Millard, Riggs makes the point that children's stories contain more truth than many give them credit. Since the Tales of the Peculiar are a metafictional ploy, or a story within a story that comments upon the book itself, Riggs's novel *Hollow City*, as a children's story, contains more truth than may be evident at first. Millard's musing is an instance of unwitting double talk. Millard the character speaks about the Tales of the Peculiar, but, as a reader who recognizes that they are in fact reading a book, Millard's words expand outside the bounds of the narrative. In this way, his words comment upon not only the Tales, but Riggs's series as well.

While upon the train to London, the children tell their background stories. This is the reader's first chance to peer into the past for each of the peculiar children. The most striking facet of their origin stories is the violent experiences that each child endured.



Bronwyn murdered her stepfather at 10 years old and Emma's father beat her senseless then tied her up in the basement and fed her only on occasion. All of the children become more in the reader's eyes than what they were in the beginning of the novel. They become tragic figures whose lives have been horrific and whose lives continue to be horrific. Riggs paints a depressing picture of all the children, but none of his characters dwell upon their tragic pasts. Jacob and Emma almost joke about Emma's escape from her father's basement. When Emma's little sister frees her, Emma's father is away so she does not have the opportunity to "burn him black" as she says. This background information reveals disturbing depths of madness and anger. While the reader may try to forget that the children are actually hundreds of years old, Riggs prods the reader back in line with segments such as Emma's story.

Despairing their bleak situation, Jacob tells Millard that he feels "about as powerful as an ant" to which Millard prophetically responds, "Ants are quite powerful, actually, relative to their size." Whether Millard responds in this way out of the simple urge to correct Jacob's misconception or out of surprising wisdom, the invisible boy's words ring of foreshadowing. Despite their horrid pasts and their current, frightening situation, there is hope Millard seems to say. Section 3 brings the novel into a darker, more violent world than that of the previous Sections, but it also highlights the children's incredible resilience.

Discussion Question 1

How does Mr. White impact the novel? Is his appearance inevitable or unexpected?

Discussion Question 2

Death, violence, and abuse haunt this section. Does the author's overall reflect the horrible events of Chapter 6 and 7?

Discussion Question 3

Do the peculiar children's backstories make them more human or more peculiar?

Vocabulary

pupil, rapping, riffing, delayed, bulging, heroism, dashed, scenario, interrogated, pearly, unflinching, feigned, passive, crackpot, compelling, anomalous, pyromaniac, stark, superstitious, glaring



Chapters 8 - 10

Summary

In Chapter 8, the children debarked the train in London. Jacob, using his hollow-detecting power, told them that there were no hollows near. As they left the station, they found that masses of children were boarding trains taking them out of the war torn capital. Emma went to a phone booth to try to call one of the time loops of the ymbrynes to see if they had all been captured or not. A furious man with an umbrella swatted at the children screaming that they had to board the train immediately. Bronwyn, the strong girl, stuffed the man into the phone booth and barred the door with his umbrella.

The children ran out of the station, dodging adults who tried to hamper them. Finding themselves in the bustling London streets, they despaired because they had no idea where to start their search until Millard, the invisible scholar who remembered the tale of "The Pigeons of St. Paul's", said that they needed to find Miss Wren's peculiar pigeons at the St. Paul's cathedral. The children caught a pigeon outside the cathedral, but Miss Peregrine indicated that none of the many pigeons around them were peculiar. Soon after, an air-raid siren blared and the children fled into the cathedral. While bombs fell, they read "The Pigeons of St. Paul's" then went into the downstairs crypt where they found a time loop.

In Chapter 9, the kids climbed down a ladder where a coffin should have been and into a cavernous time loop under the ground. As they stumbled through the dark, they found two blind, peculiar brothers, Joel and Peter, who used echolocation to move. The terrified boys, scared that Miss Peregrine's children are wights or hollow, whimpered in the darkness. The blind boys introduced themselves in the singular saying "I am Joel and Peter." After convincing the pair that they were not wights, the eerie brothers directed them towards their erstwhile home then disappeared into the shadows. As Miss Peregrine's brood moved in the indicated direction, their ears popped because they had moved into a ymbryne's time loop. Unlike Miss Wren's peculiar animal time loop, the wights had ransacked Miss Thrush's time loop and consumed many of the peculiar children. After they spotted the house, the group passed the crumbling bodies of dead peculiars, one with a tag labelling it as Mr. A. F. Crumbley's remains, and then into the building.

A telekinetic, deranged girl named Melina Manon confronted the group as they searched for a peculiar pigeon. Horace, the dreamer, finally convinced Melina that they were friendly peculiars trying to save their ymbryne by reciting obscure facts about Melina's life. The girl and the pigeon, named Winnie, introduced themselves, but Jacob felt two, powerful hollows rushing towards them and the children fled. On a hunch, Jacob warned the others that hollows could sense peculiars if they used their powers. The group ran out of the time loop of the captured ymbryne, Miss Thrush and back into 1940 London where bombs were falling.



In Chapter 10, After running from the hollows of Miss Thrush's time loop and returning to 1940 London, the children saw the city ablaze from the German airstrike. With the two hollows still in pursuit, Miss Peregrine's children and Miss Thrush's telekinetic girl and the two blind boys rushed to a random house for cover from the bombs. Bronwyn pulled the door's knob off then they ducked inside to find two orphaned sisters, Sam and the young Esme. Esme hid in the bathtub where her older sister Sam said she would be protected from the bombs. In order to comfort Esme who began to cry, Enoch reanimated a little clay homunculus he'd made in Cairnholm. The figurine's dancing made Esme forget the bombs, but Enoch's use of his peculiar power alerted the hollows of the children's location. Jacob sensed the monsters so the peculiars left the two girls inside their home and ran out the back door. The hollows chased the kids out the back door just as a mine dropped onto the house and exploded.

The kids were fine because the sweaters that the emu-raffe, Deirdre, had given the children turned out to be bulletproof. The explosion killed the two hollows, left the children with mere scrapes, and did not kill Esme and Sam. Although impaled, Sam revealed that she, too, was peculiar and could regenerate the hole in her chest. After Miss Peregrine punctured the tire of an ambulance, Bronwyn gave Esme her bulletproof sweater to keep Esme safe. Still trying to find Miss Wren, the kids followed the Melina, the telekinetic girl, and her pet pigeon.

Analysis

Just as the book's opening featured a 2 page, third person introductory description, Riggs gives another short, perspective switch as the children disembark in London. The author divides Hollow City into two parts. The first part contains Chapters 1 - 7 while the second continues from Chapter 8 - 13. While Section 4 offers many developments, the break between Part 1 and Part 2 must also be considered. Since each facet of the novel from character names to chapter divisions is a conscious choice on the author's part, cutting the 13 chapter story into two parts must be significant. The most obvious difference between the two parts is the setting. In Part 1, the children are trying to flee from the wights then to travel to London. In Part 2, they finally reach London.

Another difference between the two parts is the number of introduced characters. Besides a few notable character introductions, Part 1 largely focuses on Miss Peregrine's children specifically. Part 2 features far more characters who begin to play significant roles in the story's action. Not only are there more characters in Part 2, these characters are mostly peculiar. Finally, the reader can measure the characters against other peculiar children. Riggs offers the reader a chance to draw conclusions about what makes Miss Peregrine's children special, but he never overtly tells the reader the children's uniqueness.

In Chapter 8, the children try to leave the train station, but adults, believing the children are attempting to avoid leaving London, pursue them. In a ridiculous and comedic fashion, the peculiars overpower the larger adults and leave them howling. Bronwyn stuffs a man into a phone booth and Hugh stings an entire crowd with his bees. While



this tidbit allows for more comedic interlude from the story's largely suspenseful arc, it also emphasizes the theme of children versus adults. Much youth fiction contains instances of children subverting the will of their elders because this idea appeals to adolescent readers who typically feel rebellious themselves. What marks Riggs' take on this generic convention apart from his predecessors is the righteousness of the offending children. When the adults try to constrain the children, they are in the wrong while the youngsters attempt to save their caretaker. Consequently, the traditional roles of the offspring and parent are reversed. The peculiar children must protect the helpless adult.

With this said, Riggs immediately deflates the triumphant success of the children's rebellion. Hugh sobs because his bees, who are friends to him, had to die to aid the children in their escape. On top of this tragedy, Miss Peregrine's children are far older than any child. While their ages appear to range from about 8 to 15, they are all, with the exception of the new recruit Jacob, more than 100 years old. Perhaps to keep the appeal that arises from children outsmarting parents, Riggs does not remind the reader of this fact.

In Chapter 9 and 10, Riggs plays with actual history. He incorporates it into his story as seamlessly as he can. The story from the *Tales of The Pigeons of St. Paul's* heckle Christopher Wren, who the children guess in Miss Wren the ymbryne's brother, into rebuilding St. Paul's on the same hill that it had burned down. Sir Christopher Wren, into whose tomb the children climb, was the historical architect who built St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Wren's inclusion in Riggs's mythology of the peculiar gives legitimacy to his claim to verisimilitude, the appearance of being real. Including an actual historical figure along with his already historical setting of World War II London. On another level, at the same time that Riggs draws upon history as a legitimizer, he subverts his claim to verisimilitude by including obviously fantastical elements. While he draws on the basic facts of Wren's life, he includes a group of anthropomorphized pigeons who urge the architect to rebuild St. Paul's Cathedral.

Discussion Question 1

Is the children's escape from the train station ultimately a comedic scene? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

What purpose does Part 2's third person opening serve?

Discussion Question 3

How does the story of *The Pigeons of St Paul's* help the children? What does this effect say about the importance of reading?



Vocabulary

nudged, shimmer, grim, spittle, executioner, converging, astride, turnstile, peckish, roulette, billowed, crannies, consulting, ripe, chiseled, abandoned, figurines, corrupted, charred, smoldered, blossomed, rammed, manipulate, pirouetted, catacombs



Chapter 11 - 13

Summary

Chapter 11 began calmly as the children entered a subway station and walked along the tracks and into another time loop that the pigeon of St. Paul's found. They dodged an oncoming train then found a locked door. Miss Peregrine attacks the pigeon for the code then tapped the code against the ground with her beak. The code worked, but then Miss Peregrine whipped the dazed pigeon against the wall, killing it instantly. The children were shocked, but continued into the time loop to find a disguising room full of clothes to help them blend in with the time loop's inhabitants.

The group walked further into the time loop and into a carnival where the group walked through a tent entrance marked for performers only. As they continued through the tent, the acts became more and more peculiar. They asked some of the peculiar performers, including a folding man and snake charming woman, where Miss Wren was, but each either ignored them or laughed at them. A mysterious boy told the children that the real peculiar show was at Wakeling and Rookery on the far side of the square where they found a building that was frozen solid with flakes of snow drifting from it. Melina identified the building as the peculiar archives where official records were kept. Among the crowd gathered around the building, they despaired that they would never find Miss Wren, but a woman approached them then turned into a wren right in front of them. The wren flew into the building then a secret door opened for the kids and a cloaked woman introduced herself as Miss Wren.

Chapter 12 found the relieved children housed in the peculiar war headquarters where a powerful ice-making peculiar girl, Althea, kept the building frozen in order to protect them from the wights and hollows. The children related their entire story to the astonished Miss Wren who then rushed Miss Peregrine to the examination room where she went to work bringing her sister ymbryne back into human form. The folding man from the circus, Sergei Andropov, introduced himself to the group as the captain of the peculiar resistance army. Sergei led them to a mess hall where he and a peculiar clown tried to add them to the peculiar army. The clown separated the echolocating brothers in order to make them lookouts, but the second they stopped holding hands, the two shrieked so loudly that plates cracked and the ice chipped. The clown remarked that the group would be a welcome addition to their army then led them to the infirmary where three peculiars who the wights had captured then let loose lay.

The three who the wights experimented upon could only mutter gibberish. Millard examined the numerous scars on each of their bodies and said that the wights had consumed their souls by extracting their second, peculiar soul through the soles of their feet. After the nurse kicked the visitors out, Emma spoke privately to Jacob and told him that she wanted him to leave the peculiars and save himself because he still had a family to whom he could go home. Jacob promised her that he would consider it.



In Chapter 13, the final chapter, Jacob wandered through the frozen building's halls to find a half-frozen hollow. He stared at the monster then, instead of killing it, left the room. Jacob returned to the meeting area where Millard poured over the Map of Days, a map that charted all of Peculiardom. After gathering the courage, Jacob informed the group that he was leaving after Miss Peregrine was cured. Jacob realized that Emma was right. The children were all so old and he was from an entirely different world. The kids turned in for the night and Jacob dreamt of his grandfather who told him to not fight the pain that hollows cause him because of his power and instead use that power to speak to them. Emma woke him up to see Miss Peregrine's change. As the kids gathered, they saw the falcon change not into Miss Peregrine, but into Miss Peregrine's wight-brother Caul Peregrine. Caul revealed that his men were outside the building and that he had already raided Miss Wren's peculiar animal menagerie. As the children, armed with icicles, led Caul into another room, he grabbed Althea and an icicle of his own. Althea fought him and began freezing his body from the legs up. Caul warned her to stop, but she would not until Caul stabbed her through the back. Althea fell dead at his feet and all the ice melted. The wight soldiers rushed into the building and apprehended all the peculiars then started escorting them to their laboratory. At gunpoint, the wights brought the children out of the time loop and into a London subway station in the present.

Seeing a police officer, Bronwyn yelled that for help, but the officer strolled up to them then revealed his pupil-less eyes beneath his sunglasses. Just before they boarded the train, the folding Russian man slipped from his handcuffs and ran only to be shot in the back. The subway station's crowd fled in confusion. Emma melted her cuffs then burned the face of the nearest soldier then melted Jacob's cuffs as well. Bronwyn slapped the older of the two blind brothers then pulled the younger away from him. The echolocators emitted a percussive scream that knocked everyone to the ground. Still woozy Jacob felt Addison, the peculiar bulldog, pulling him into a phone booth along with Emma. Jacob passed out then awoke to a call from his father. Crying, Jacob's father urged the boy to come home and that whatever the trouble, he and Jacob's mother would welcome their son home. As he spoke to his father, the now unfrozen hollowgast from the peculiar headquarters wrapped its three tongues around the phone booth. Wracked with the pain of being so close to the monster, Jacob remembered his grandfather's words and embraced the pain. He spoke the hollow's guttural language and told it to back off. Jacob helped Emma to her feet then he and Addison left the phone booth with the obedient hollow in tow.

Analysis

This final section of the book contains the story's major rising action, climax, and a small amount of resolution or falling action. It is within Section 5 that the children begin to realize the effect that they have upon each other and to recognize the manipulative power of the wights. After narrowly escaping death while the Germans bomb London, Sam, the peculiar girl who can regenerate her body after being hurt, accuses the children of being callow monsters. She says, "If even outcasts and downtrodden folk like yourselves can't muster a bit of compassion for others...then there's no hope for this



world". This quote speaks to far more than the children's situation. Riggs himself seems to speak through Sam's voice in order to teach his readers a moral. This impulse to improve a reader through morality tales is a long tradition that Riggs, consciously or unconsciously, embraces here. His urge to instruct is a common facet of children's literature that, until this point, Riggs seems to scorn. Sam sees Miss Peregrine, actually the wight Caul, puncture the tire of an ambulance simply to hurry the kids along their way. The result is that the medics can no longer drive to the wounded. Sam's words affect Emma and Bronwyn most particularly. Both girls argue with Sam, but ultimately for naught.

This episode allows the reader a glimpse into the mostly unspoken consequences of the peculiar children's actions. While they rampage through another person's time period, they disregard the people who live in 1940 as insignificant. Emma, the courageous leader, realizes that the kids have an effect upon the world. Disheartened, Bronwyn selflessly gives Sam's little sister, Esme, her bulletproof sweater in order to keep her safe from the bombs. While Emma impotently struggles with her shortcomings, Bronwyn, the mother of the group, recognizes how she can help the situation even if it is to her own detriment. Besides the individual character developments, this incident hints at the theme of the peculiar versus the ordinary.

While the reader naturally sides with the children, through Sam's eyes, the reader understands the children in a different light. The peculiar is not something to be celebrated if extraordinary talent is used for bad purposes. The most obvious case of the corruption of power occurs in the wights. Miss Wren tells the children about how the wights were a group of peculiar children who experimented on themselves in order to gain power. Instead of becoming like the giants of old, they devolve into hideous monsters called hollows. These hollows then evolve into wights after eating peculiar souls. The wights' desire for power literally corrupts their bodies. In this instance, the peculiar is not a blessing like it seems to be in the children. Another more subtle peculiar cruelty is Miss Peregrine's murdering of the St. Paul pigeon. While the reader soon finds out that Caul Peregrine, Miss Peregrine's wight brother, had been parading as the children's headmistress, when the falcon kills the pigeon, the children believe that their benevolent caretaker had murdered another peculiar animal. It is no coincidence that the death of this hapless animal occurs directly after Sam denounces the group and refuses to embrace her own peculiarity.

The shift in tone that occurs after Sam's words begins to become more evident as the children get closer to finding Miss Wren in Chapter 11. As they walk through the circus, Olive wanders off and Bronwyn rebukes her saying, "I've told you time and again, never talk to normals." On a superficial level, Riggs tweaks the adage "don't talk to strangers" for humorous ends, but on another, he reinforces the children's prejudice against normality. Again taking a moral stance, the author seems to say that being peculiar is something to be celebrated, but only if the celebration does not disparage people who are normal. Another point of interest in this line is the position of authority from which Bronwyn speaks. Throughout the novel, authority, specifically adult authority, is something that inspires skepticism and even ridicule as kids' escape from the London train station evinces. When Bronwyn, who acts as something of a parent to the younger



children, reprimands Olive, she embraces the authority that Riggs encourages the reader to be skeptical of. In this light, the author hints that the strong girl's words should be taken with a grain of salt.

In keeping with this theme of authority, in Chapter 12, Miss Wren tries to reassert the proper order of caretaking of the mature ymbrynes supervising the young peculiars. Miss Wren asserts that "it isn't the duty of peculiar children to worry for the welfare of ymbrynes - it's ours to worry for you." This admonition falls upon deaf ears because Miss Peregrine's children had to take control and look out for themselves for the course of the entire novel. If it is the job of the ymbrynes to worry about their brood, then Miss Peregrine and her sister ymbrynes fail spectacularly. The wights either kill or capture almost all the peculiars hiding in the time loops and make off with the ymbrynes. Again, Riggs gives an instance in which the position of authority is mistaken.

One of Section 5's most unique traits is its diversity of views. In other words, this section features disparate characters who offer their perceptions to each other and, subsequently, to the reader. For example, the belligerent, peculiar clown who tries to recruit the children into the peculiar army tells Miss Peregrine's brood, "You're the most obviously peculiar bunch of peculiars I've ever laid eyes on." The folding man, Sergei, agrees with the clown. Their combined impression of the children lends weight to their conclusion. The interaction between two groups of peculiars gives the reader a peculiarity litmus test of sorts. Since the reader follows Miss Peregrine's kids throughout the story, one cannot get a sense of whether the children are normal for peculiars or if they are, in fact, more peculiar than other peculiars. The clown and the Russian argue that they are absolutely stranger than the average peculiar.

After Caul Peregrine reveals himself and after Jacob and Emma escape from the wights in the confusion that follows the blind brothers' scream, Jacob speaks to his father on the telephone. As the reader sees throughout the entire novel, Riggs obsesses with the fallibility of authority figures. Just because someone has power does not mean that they are just or right in the wielding of that power. Even though Jacob's father breaks down in tears at the sound of Jacob's voice, he stills misunderstands Jacob's predicament. Despite Jacob's insistence to the contrary, his father cannot and assumes Jacob must be addicted to drugs. "Oh, God, I knew it. You're on drugs, aren't you?" While Jacob's situation is unbelievable, his father does not even try to let his son explain himself and, instead, jumps to the conclusion that his son is an addict. As previously noted, names are integral to the book. Each character's name reveals something about them. In this light, the fact that Jacob's father does not have a name is just as revealing as if he did possess one. Instead of referring to the man by his first name, Jacob's father only earns a place in the book through his relation to Jacob, the protagonist. By not naming this character, the author indicates a bias towards both parenthood and authority.

Discussion Question 1

Many conflicting perspectives come into play in this section. What conclusions do the other characters come to in regards to Miss Peregrine's children?



Discussion Question 2

The clown and the folding man wish to fight the wights and even try to enlist Jacob and his friends in their army. What reasons do some of the children have for resisting this martial pressure and what do those reasons reveal about the children themselves?

Discussion Question 3

How does the novel's ending mark it as a book in a series? What strings still need to be tied?

Vocabulary

womblike, dismembered, deliberating, shredded, warble, screeching, damned, enthusiastic, exhausted, rollicking, unrelenting, obscured, monumental, distortion, balustraded, pretentious, dismissal, vials, diluted, atrocious



Characters

Jacob Portman

Jacob is the novel's protagonist and narrator. Through his eyes, the reader experiences the story of Miss Peregrine's children and the inner landscape of Jacob's mind. The reader is privy to Jacob's fears and his obsession with living up to his grandfather's standard. In the story's beginning, Jacob begins to fall in love with Emma, the same girl with whom his grandfather was involved. Through Emma's encouragement and support, Jacob's peculiar power of being able to sense and see hollows grows. Jacob matures from a nervous, overshadowed, and confused boy at the beginning of the story and becomes a powerful peculiar who takes charge of his dismal situation.

Jacob's parents raised him in Florida then sent him to his grandfather's home in Wales one summer. Jacob's grandfather, Abe Portman, was also a peculiar. Both Jacob and his grandfather have the power to sense and control hollows, but Jacob is the stronger of the two. Despite his power, a hollow eventually kills Abe then Jacob takes up his grandfather's mantle and kills this hollow in turn. In following in his grandfather's footsteps, Jacob even falls in love with Emma Bloom, the same girl that his grandfather loved. Because of Miss Peregrine's time loop, the Emma remains a teenager despite the time that passes in the real world. Through this loop, Jacob is able to meet her in the same way that his grandfather met her.

Jacob's progress as a character can be chartered by looking at his peculiar power. The power to see and feel when hollows are around, while great for survival, does not allow Jacob to contribute to the group in most situations. At the end of this book when Emma, Jacob, and Addison are in a phone booth, a hollow attacks them. Jacob gives in to the pain of sensing the hollow and then speaks the monster's own language, ordering it to back off. Jacob then commands it to follow the trio as they walk out of the subway station and the story ends. If only looking at his growth in peculiarity, Jacob is a round character who changes both in power and in emotional maturity.

Emma Bloom

Emma is the novel's major love interest. Since *Hollow City* follows Jacob's first person narration, Jacob's love of Emma gives her great importance. As a child, Emma began manifesting her frightening powers. At about 10 years old, her hands started heating up so hot that she ran to the grocer's and put her hands in the ice. The grocer chased her home and told her father that Emma had melted all his ice. As her powers grew and grew, Emma's mother fled the house because she thought her daughter was a demon. Her father's reaction was no better.

He locked her in the basement and tied her down with asbestos plates so that she could not burn her way through her bonds. Often drunk, he beat her and only occasionally



decided to feed her. On the rare occasions he fed her, he kept her tied down so that Emma would not burn him. One day, Emma's sister crept downstairs and freed the starving girl. Emma escaped from her father then and, by chance, found Miss Peregrine who took her into the Cairnholm time loop.

Throughout Hollow City, Emma acts as the children's leader. While she does not tend to the children like Bronwyn does, Emma acts as the group's enthusiastic master. Her opinion heavily influences the children's decisions because they look to her as the strongest of them. Emma's seemingly unconquerable attitude pushes the group past even their worst trials.

As Jacob falls in love with Emma, she encourages him to test the limits of his power and he begins to share the burden of leadership with her. Under her tutelage, Jacob starts to take matters into his own hands and to lead the children despite the fact that he is 100 years their junior. During her more than 100 years of life, Emma was involved with Jacob's grandfather the same way that she is involved with Jacob.

Alma LeFay Peregrine, Miss Peregrine

The entirety of the plot centers on Miss Peregrine. While she does not say a single word throughout the novel and the reader finds out that the falcon that the children tried to save was not even their mistress, the kids' adoration for her drives their every action. They believe that they rescue her from the wights then they risk themselves to find another ymbryne in order to cure her of her accosted state. Miss Peregrine, like her name suggests, has the ability to transform into a peregrine falcon on top of her ymbryne ability to manipulate time. The ability to morph into this bird is not unique to Miss Peregrine though. Her brother is able to do the same and masquerade as his sister while he journeys with the children.

Abraham 'Abe' Portman

Abe is Jacob's grandfather. While he is dead during the course of the novel, Abe's appears to enter into Jacob's dreams and influence his actions. All the characters in the book draw their importance from their relationship to Jacob because he is the novel's narrator. It is the measure of this relationship that marks Abe Portman as unique. Despite his complete absence, Jacob tries to follow in his grandfather's footsteps. Abe's talent was his ability to sense hollows and to manipulate them. Jacob inherits this very trait, but struggles to live up to his grandfather's powerful legacy. Jacob toils in Abe's shadow throughout the book.

Caul Peregrine

Caul is one of Miss Peregrine's two brothers. Throughout the novel, Caul poses as Miss Peregrine by staying in the form of a peregrine falcon. The children mistake him for their beloved ymbryne. Through his deception, Caul, a wight, captures the children and the



last free ymbryne, Miss Wren. As Miss Peregrine's brother, Caul represents the sickening distortion of the wights. He is his sister's foil, or opposite. His violent tendencies and disregard for peculiars exacerbates and emphasizes Miss Peregrine's passivity and her nurturing treatment of the peculiar children.

Balenciaga Wren, Miss Wren

Miss Wren is the ymbryne whose time loop contains all the peculiar animals she could find. She goes to London to save her sister ymbrynes when she hears that the wights have captured them. The children first hear of Miss Wren when they visit her time loop filled with peculiar animals. These animals, besieged by a hollow, cower in their menagerie until the children manage to kill the monster. In gratitude and sympathy for the children's plight, the animals direct the children to London where their mistress, Miss Wren, can be found. After many trials, the children manage to find Miss Wren who then turns the falcon form of Caul Peregrine back into a human. None of them, including Miss Wren, knew that the falcon was Caul and not Miss Peregrine. Miss Wren's reaction to Caul's appearance suggests that the two were romantically involved at some point. The wights capture Miss Wren and the rest of her peculiars.

Bekhir Bekhmananov

Bekhir is the most important non-peculiar character in the novel. Throughout, Riggs portrays non peculiars as less than peculiars. Consequently, Bekhir's heroism is all the more notable. Bekhir is the leader of the gypsies that the children encounter on their way to London. After learning that they are peculiar, he and his men trick the pursuing wights into thinking the children are not in their camp. In honor of their fellow outcasts, the gypsies have a festival for the peculiars and Bekhir reveals that his own son is peculiar. The boy becomes invisible just like Millard.

Mr. White

Mr. White is the leader of the wights that capture and torture the gypsies. He also manages to kidnapp the children just before they get on their train to London. White, not at all as pure as the color his name signifies, nearly kills the gypsies and tortures the children, but Hugh, the bee-weilder, kills White and his men.

Millard Nullings

Millard is the invisible scholar. At a young age, he started disappearing until he was completely and permanantly invisible. At the beginning of Hollow City, Millard is simply the invisible boy who studies all things peculiar. On the train ride to London, Jacob learns that Millard is not completely content with his situation. Although he can sneak around well, he cannot interact with others unless he is completely covered or he



reveals his peculiarity. It is Millard who figures out that the hollows are stealing peculiar children's second souls through the soles of their feet.

Bronwyn Bruntley

As the motherly figure of the group, Bronwyn tends to the younger children. She is the bedrock of the peculiars' moral. To soothe the children, she reads from the Tales of the Peculiar and makes sure that the kids stay in line with her rules. She admonishes Olive for speaking to normals and she reproaches the others if they act poorly. With her super strength, she throws a boulder onto a hollow and kills it. When she was a child, she accidentally snapped the neck of her abusive stepfather.

Althea

Althea is one of the most powerful peculiars in the series. When the wights attacked the office of peculiar affairs, she released power she did not realize she had and froze the entire building including some wights and hollows. With her power, she keeps a constant shell of ice on the building so that the other peculiars may use the building as a base of operations. When Caul Peregrine transforms into a human, he takes Althea hostage and threatens to stab her with an icicle. She resists him and starts freezing him from the legs up. Just before the ice reaches his shoulders, Caul stabs Althea through the back. With her death, the building's ice melts and the wights capture the children.

Enoch O'Conner

Enoch is the peculiar children's brutal pessimist. He constantly whines about their predicament to the other children's dismay. Despite his attitude, his words provide a much-needed sense of realism for the other children. Enoch is able to raise the recently deceased and carries a clay homunculus with him that he can reanimate at will.

Hugh Apiston

Hugh carries an entire hive of bees in his stomach. These bees are his friends and follow his commands. When the wights capture the other children, he kills an entire squad of them with a field full of wild honeybees.

Addison MacHenry

Addison is the peculiar dog who takes care of the other peculiar animals in Miss Wren's menagerie. After welcoming the children into the time loop, he provides them with the information that Miss Wren is in London. At the end of the novel, when the wights capture the children, he pulls the unconscious Emma and Jacob away from the wights and into a phone booth where they are able to hide from the wights.

Deirdre the Emu-raffe

Deidre is a pessimistic peculiar animal that is a mix of a donkey and a giraffe. Besides providing sarcastic banter, Deirdre gives the children wool sweaters that she forgets the purpose of. The kids find out that the sweaters, made from Deirdre's own wool, are bulletproof and save their lives when a mine falls near them in London.



Symbols and Symbolism

Tales of the Peculiar

What makes the Tales of the Peculiar so important to the novel is its comment upon the children's plight. The Tales are the author's way of playing with the metafictional aspects of the novel. For instance when Bronwyn first reads from the tales, the children hear about the peculiar animals that nearly went extinct because hunters were trying to kill them. Similarly the wights, the hunters of the story, try to kill Miss Peregrine's children, the peculiar animals. In this way, the Tales of the Peculiar both give the children information and act as a tool of furthering the plot and outlining the book's important themes. Millard, the invisible scholar, says that he never knew the Tales of the Peculiar were anything more than children's stories. He then realizes that there is much to be learned from the Tales. In the same way, Riggs seems to say that there is much to be learned from his own children's novel *Hollow City*.

Jacob's Cellphone

Jacob's cell phone represents his past. Because he is with the other peculiar children in 1940 London, his cell phone has no purpose at all. Despite its lack of utility, in fact because of its lack of utility, the cell phone becomes a powerful symbol of Jacob's past. Consequently, his reticence to leave his cell phone reveals his yearning to once again embrace the present in which his family lives in Florida. Ultimately, the cell phone attempts to pull Jacob back to the present when, in the telephone booth at the end of the novel, Jacob's father calls him and asks him to come home to Florida.

Photographs

Continuing the trend he established in the first novel, Riggs periodically gives the reader photographs of the story's events. In the first book, he justified these pictures by hinting that they were the pictures that Jacob's grandfather, Abe, showed his grandson. While the photographs can no longer be those of Jacob's grandfather, they become representations of Jacob's own trials and encounters. Jacob inherits the episodic photographing from his grandfather just as he inherits his peculiar power from the man.

Bronwyn's Trunk

Bronwyn's trunk is the strong girls keepsake. Although its utility is limited, it is difficult to flee from the wights while carrying the trunk, Bronwyn retains the trunk because it holds the Tales of the Peculiar, a powerful symbol in and of itself. The trunk also represents her peculiarity. A grown man cannot lift the trunk, in fact, not even three grown men can lift the trunk as the reader understands when the three train conductors tried to lift the



trunk. By nature of the fact that Bronwyn is able to lift the trunk and carry some of her past with her, the trunk gains symbolic significance.

Florida

Florida represents the possibility of escape for Jacob. Florida is the safe haven of Jacob past life. It is where his family, his friends, and his belongings remain. Although Jacob refuses to return to his present, he yearns for the boring peace of Florida. Towards the end of the novel, Emma, his love interest, convinces Jacob to leave the peculiar behind and return to Florida. At her insistence Jacob agrees, but the wights interfere with his plans to return home.

Wool Sweaters

Deirdre, the emu-raffe, gives all the children wool sweaters that save their lives. Although Deirdre forgets the special properties of the sweaters, the kids find out that they are bulletproof. When the mine falls on Esme and Sam's house, glass and shrapnel spike the children, but the sweaters stop the projectiles before they reach the skin.

Map of Days

Map of Days charts all of peculiardom throughout both time and location. Miss Peregrine's house had a replica of the Map of Days, but it was lost when the wights attacked. After the wights destroyed this house and raided the time loop, the map was lost to the children. When Millard and the rest of the peculiar children discover the Map of Days in Miss Wren's ice fortress, they rediscover and regain a remnant of their past. Just as the Map transcends time, the children's finding of the Map of Days transcends time by allowing them a semblance of the peace that they once knew.

Bronwyn's Ivory Comb

Bronwyn's ivory comb is another of the strong girls keepsakes. The reader finds out that Bronwyn's step father was abusive and as she came into her power, she accidentally broke his neck. Consequently, the reader can infer that Bronwyn's only parent, her mother, is the only one who ever truly loved the girl. When the wights capture the children at the train station, they throw away Bronwyn's mother's comb saying she should have learned how to use it. The wights think superficially, consequently, they cannot understand the non-physical meaning behind the comb. Bronwyn had in fact learned to use the comb because it represented not a physical keepsake, but how her mother carried herself. Bronwyn's mothering of the children is her way of embodying the morals that she saw in her own mother.



Train Tickets

Horace buys himself and the children train tickets to carry them to London. He buys these tickets with the money he salvaged from the wreck of their time loop. In this light, they are some of the last tokens of Miss Peregrine's time loop. The money and the train tickets are Miss Peregrine's last gift to the children in this novel. Despite the impossibility of their task, the children find a way to succeed in finding Miss Wren who is able to help Miss Peregrine.

Enoch's Homunculus

Enoch's clay homunculus is a representation of his peculiar power. Since Ransom Riggs, the author, gives many of the children one item that defines them, the homunculus defines Enoch. Enoch's pessimism and constant whining may relate to the state of his homunculus. The figure is clay and can only come alive at certain points. Similarly, Enoch has soft skin, seems to be able to break easily, and is very rarely lively.

Horace's Clothes

Horace, the boy who has prophetic dreams, takes pride in his appearance. Despite the fact that his body is that of a 10 year old, he wears a top hat and a suit made of fine fabric. When the children enter the time loop that leads them to Miss Wren, they find a large closet full of clothing. Overjoyed, Horace rushes to the clothes only to find that they are of poor quality. The boy's fascination with how he appears reflects his own insecurity and in how he presents himself. He believes, that because of his prophetic ability, he must appear legitimate because those who foretell the future are rarely believed. On top of this disadvantage, Horace is only a boy whose word means little to adults. His ability to prophesize very rarely finds traction because people naturally doubt the words of a child, especially words of prophecy.



Settings

Ocean around Cairnholm, Wales, 1940

The novel begins with the children at sea. The wights chase them in submarines while the children paddle across the ocean between Wales and England. It is here that Riggs begins his story. This ocean gives the reader fishermen's perspective on the children who seem like wraiths. It is here that the novel's first, major theme develops. This theme, the difference between the normal and the peculiar, becomes more and more evident as the novel continues.

Miss Wren's Menagerie Time Loop

The children find their first respite in Miss Wren's time loop. Finally, they find other peculiars. Although these peculiars are animals, two are able to speak and all of them greet the children kindly. This time loop is where the children's travels finally gain purpose and direction. Before the menagerie, the children simply fled from the wights but, after Addison the dog tells the children that the ymbrynes are in London, they understand what they must do to save Miss Peregrine.

Gypsy Camp, England, 1940

After traveling through England's war-torn countryside, the children come across a gypsy caravan. After hopping on this caravan, the gypsies capture and interrogate them. Once the children display their powers, the gypsies willingly hide them from the wights because they believe that both gypsies and peculiars are wanderers and must stick together. After fooling the wights, Bekhir and his men have a party where the children have a moment of relief.

Train to London, 1940

While riding on the train to London, Jacob learns about the histories of Miss Peregrine's children. Because he is still not quite one of their compatriots, Jacob feels the need to understand them through their back stories. While on the train, he learns of each child's past. These stories range from Bronwyn's accidental murder of her stepfather to Horace's prophetic dreams. This setting serves as an important point of character development.

St. Paul's Cathedral, London, 1940

When the kids finally reach London, they become entirely disillusioned about their prospect of success. Seeing the destruction in the capital and the millions who inhabit it,



they believe their task of finding Miss Wren to be impossible. Only after reading about Saint Paul's Cathedral in the Tales of the Peculiar does their task find purpose again. They rush to the Cathedral to capture a peculiar pigeon in order to ask it where to find its mistress. Instead of finding a pigeon immediately, the children climb into a crypt in the basement where they come across a raided time loop. After interacting with the loop's residents, they not only find a peculiar pigeon but save a group of peculiar children from 2 hollows. Again, through both their perseverance and their luck, the children get one step closer to finding Miss Wren and curing Miss Peregrine.

Peculiar Archives and the Council of Ymbrynes

The peculiar headquarters that Miss Wren establishes, with the help of the powerful peculiar named Althea who freezes the building, is the novel's most important location. The archives and the council room are the beacon of hope for the peculiars as they search for the ymbryne, Miss Wren. When the children finally find Miss Wren, they learn that the ymbryne cannot offer them the safety that they thought they could find. On top of the symbolic significance of the peculiar archives, the building is where Caul Peregrine and his wights capture the peculiar children in the novel's climax and destroy the building in the process.



Themes and Motifs

Peculiarity

In a novel with the word peculiarity in its subtitle, normality defines the strange at the same time that it exerts societal pressure. In other words, normality as in the people in the novel without powers expect certain things both from each other and from the children. The most important question that Riggs raises throughout the novel is whether peculiarity is something to be celebrated or criticized.

For most of the novel the children are free from monsters. Their near hopeless situation combined with the fact that Rick gives the story through Jacob's perspective creates a powerful desire in the reader to take the side of the children. Well this is certainly understandable, Riggs also introduces characters that criticize the children's use of their powers. The most important example of this phenomenon occurs when the children take refuge in the house of Esme and Sam during the bombing of London. While the reader knows that the children seek refuge from/to Hallows, Sam criticizes the children's sometimes violent methods of escape and their disregard for normals, those without peculiar powers.

She sees how Caul Peregrine, pretending to be his sister, pops the tire of an ambulance only to get the children moving. After narrowly surviving the explosion of a mine, the kids debate over whether they should steal the ambulance or not. Most argue they should because the safety of normals is not their concern. While they argue, the Peregrine falcon destroys the vehicle's tires.

This incident highlights the peculiar children's feelings of isolation and their proclivity for unconscious revenge. Rather than sympathizing with the plight of London's commoners, they think instead of their own safety and the accomplishment of their goal. Their subtle hatred for those without peculiar powers stems from their harsh treatment and their resulting stubborn sullenness blinds them to the difficulties of others, especially normals.

The Power of the Written Word

As a written text itself, *Hollow City* privileges the written word and the visual reception of a text. For example, the *Tales of the Peculiar* is a book that guides the story's action. Millard, the invisible boy, recognizes the tome's potential and remarks that he had never realized that the *Tales* were anything more than children's stories.

Since the *Tales* are a physical book in Riggs's invented and purely imaginative world, they reflect the author's notions on the purpose and capacity of literature. In this light, anything that the author associates with the *Tales* reflects on the book itself. In thinking along this line, the reader may notice that Riggs refers back to the *Tales* often and always reverently. Despite the fact that his characters do not initially realize the value of



the Tales, these same characters, along with the reader, soon come to see that the Tales offer real world solutions for the children's problems.

When the children are lost in the woods and fleeing from the bloodthirsty wights, Bronwyn, the mother of the group, reads the younger children a story from the Tales. This story is about peculiar animals who flee from hunters. Eventually, a giant named Cuthbert saves the animals by picking them up and putting them on a mountain top. At first glance, a reader may skim this passage without seeing its relevance, but at a closer look, the story is a direct retelling of the children's own plight.

The peculiar children are the peculiar animals who flee from the wights who hunt them. The passage's significance lies not in its similarities to the children's situation, but in the slight difference between the two. Namely, the peculiar children are not saved by a friendly giant like the animals in the story. Instead, the Tales themselves save the children by leading them to a time loop where they find shelter. In this light, the power of the word is as powerful as the arms of a giant.

Inheritance and the Cyclical

From the first book of the Peculiar Children series to the second, *Hollow City*, Riggs obsesses with the idea of inheritance and living up to the standards of one's elders. The novel's basic premise that magical ymbrynes have the power to institute a time loop in which the same day repeats itself involves the notion of the cyclical passage of time and the repetition of events. With this premise, Riggs begins his movement into understanding the nuances of the passage of time and the changes, or lack thereof, of time.

The most important relationship involving inheritance is that of Jacob and his grandfather Abraham Portman. Abe had the power to sense and manipulate hollows. With this power, he found his way to Miss Peregrine's time loop in *Whales*. He met and fell in love with the fire girl Emma and went on to hone his powers by killing hollows by the score. Abe casts a long shadow over Jacob and the boy's relationship with the other peculiar children.

Jacob inherits his grandfather's peculiar power of hollow manipulation. He himself finds his way to Miss Peregrine's time loop and falls in love with Emma just as his grandfather did. Despite his almost perfect repetition of his grandfather's actions, Jacob falls short of achieving the same status that his hollow slaying grandfather achieved. He cannot manage to fully develop his power in the same way his grandfather did until he dreams of Abe giving him advice about his power. After this point, Jacob embraces the pain that a hollow's presence causes and manages to manipulate a hollow.

With this central inheritance relationship in mind, one begins to see Riggs's interest and development of the theme of repetition through the past and present. Riggs seems to say that what comes before determines what follows. The hereditary Portman power and Jacob's following in his grandfather's footsteps proves this point. Pointedly, this



inheritance and the repetition of the past and present take place in a historical setting. This setting brings the idea of the past to the forefront of the reader's mind and, when that setting moves into the present, it comments upon the relationship between the past and present.

Age

One of the most interesting and important results of the ymbryne's power to create time loops is the fact that the peculiar children are all centenarians. Without this unique idea of an old soul trapped in the body of a child, the book loses much of its shine. The children may wear the bodies of youngsters, but their minds, for the most part, are far more advanced than those of other children.

With this discrepancy between appearance and reality, Riggs finds room to play with the reader's expectations. In other words, because the children seem to be gradeschool age, other characters treat them as children. Despite their appearance, the children are able to handle situations as if they are adults. Within this odd grey area of age and experience, Riggs comments upon the expectations that adults have about children and the largely underestimated prowess of the young.

For instance, when the children finally find Miss Wren, they are massively relieved to have a maternal figure back in their lives. Despite their initial feeling of relief, they soon realize that Miss Wren is far from capable of handling the nearly impossible situation in which she finds herself. Since they see that Miss Wren cannot take the burden from their shoulders, they begin to realize how much they themselves had been doing and how much they had achieved without the help of anyone else, especially anyone older than them.

Since the peculiars' only hope lies trapped in an ice fortress outside of which wights prowl, Miss Wren's inability becomes apparent. Her words to the children telling them that they no longer have to take care of themselves and that it is the duty of the ymbrynes to take care of the children and not the other way around underscore her absolute lack of control. She attempts to reestablish the hierarchy of elders caring for children, but only succeeds in worrying the children even more and eventually failing in her promise to take care of the children.

When Caul Peregrine reveals himself, it is not Miss Wren who takes control of the situation, but the mopish ice maker, Althea. While Miss Wren nearly faints, Althea begins to trap Caul in ice. Ultimately, Caul kills Althea. This murder highlights both the capacity of the young to act without the restraint of age and the lack of power that age supposedly brings. All in all, Riggs criticizes the absolute authority of experience that many try to establish over children by giving the reader situations in which children perform better than adults.

The Pursuit

The form of the novel is a direct result of the plot. *Hollow City* follows the peculiar children as they run from the wights who wish to consume their second soul. This premise does not allow for much room in terms of plot formation. The entirety of the novel involves the children running and the wights chasing. In other words, the book is a game of cat and mouse.

Just like a game of cat and mouse, the terms of the contract between the cat and the mouse, or in this case the wights and the children, is a mortal one. If the wights catch the children, the children die. If the children successfully evade the wights, the children survive. While this format is brutally simple in terms of plot conventions, the author layers in levels of development between the characters.

Instead of a novel about a simple pursuit, the story focuses on the human dynamics of Riggs's invented and largely inhuman world. The children are people who must survive in an inhospitable world in which monsters wish to eat their souls. What makes the pursuit so important to the novel as a theme is that, of necessity, the children must grow to survive.

This growth develops the novel from more than a ridiculous and trite game of cat and mouse and into a layered, dynamic story involving the growth of individuals. The novel's suspenseful tone combined with its occasional use of humor provides the theme of pursuit in a human and relatable way. The author employs the theme of the pursuit, mainly, in order to push the plot forward, but the result is that the pursuit also pushes character development forward. For instance, Jacob, in order to help the group survive, must learn to better wield his powers of hollow sensing. While this example is an obvious case of development, Jacob's training of his power is also his way of attempting to live up to his father's legacy and meet the expectations of the other peculiar children.

Styles

Point of View

For the most part, the author uses a close first person perspective focusing on Jacob Portman. He tells his story using the pronouns "we" and "I". Through this tightly focused narration, the reader only sees actions through Jacob's eyes. As with most first person perspectives, sometimes Jacob is unreliable. When events take place while he is not present, the reader does not get access to that action. Accordingly, this tight perspective forces Riggs to maintain the pacing of his novel by bombarding Jacob with tragedies and troubles. Since the perspective does not shift between Jacob and another character, Riggs must push Jacob forward in order to keep the sense of suspense that he desperately seeks to cultivate in his novel. A side effect of Jacob's narration is his unreliability.

Since all characters in *Hollow City* are fallible and can misunderstand both each other and the events around them, Jacob is essentially unreliable. All action that the reader receives through Jacob must be taken with skepticism because Jacob is only a teenage boy whose understanding is limited. Perhaps the most important part of the first person perspective is its effect on the reader's biases. Since Jacob's perspective is the only one that the reader gets, the narration sways the reader to sympathize with Jacob and the children. Not for a moment would the reader think that the wights might be sympathetic characters as well because Jacob hates them and considers them monsters.

While his hatred is well founded, his perspective does not allow room for dissension of opinions. The only time that events force the reader to consider the wight's perspective is when Caul Peregrine describes his ideology in the peculiar headquarters at the end of the novel. Despite Caul's seemingly well founded opinion, Jacob dismisses the idea that it is the wights who have been wronged outright because he despises them. Accordingly, the reader naturally agrees with Jacob, the longterm narrator.

The point of view switches only twice in the novel. During the prologue to the novel and during the introduction to the book's second part, the perspective is that of an omniscient third person. As the children row out to sea, the narrator gives the perspective of the passing fishermen and of an omniscient narrator who sees into the sentiments of both the fishermen and the children. The function of this perspective shift is to acclimatize the reader to how others perceive the peculiar children. The fishermen see the children as terrifying ghosts and cannot understand that the kids are in fact real. In Part 2 of the book, the perspective becomes third person omniscient again and the narrator describes the peculiars as they arrive in London and disembark from the train. In both of these instances, the reader gains insight into how others view the children. These moments serve liberation from Jacob's limited third person perspective.



Language and Meaning

Ransom Riggs employs mildly sophisticated language that reveals his desire to impress upon the reader the unique pairing of erudite manner and adolescent circumstance. In other words, the sometimes high flung vocabulary underscores the ironic situation of the children themselves who are centenarians wearing the bodies of youngsters. While this situation is certainly ironic, it is also paradoxical. The unique invention of the time loops allows Riggs to play with the intersection of age and manner. What is expected of the children is not what is given. They may appear young, but their language and their overall manner belie the fact that they are far too old for their bodies.

Besides the opportunity for humor, this odd pairing of physical appearance and language capacity is troublesome for Jacob who narrates the story. Jacob is not 100 years old like the others. He is simply a teenaged Floridian who struggles to keep afloat in a world that wishes him dead by the hands of a monster. Despite Jacob's young age and the fact that the novel is a limited first person perspective, Jacob's language is elevated in the same way that the other children's language is elevated. Since Jacob does not have the same experience as the other children, he should speak far more rudimentarily and should not provide the reader with the complex narration that he does.

This unique intersection of language and experience provides the reader with more than simple insight into the minds of the characters, it provides the reader with a glimpse into the author's mind. Since Jacob is young, presumably in his early years of high school, it is surprising that he is able to speak as the other children, who are centuries old, do. This contradiction reveals Riggs's own urge to appear erudite and provide challenging language to his readers. Since Jacob, in his own dialogue, does not speak in the same scholarly tone that his narration perpetuates, Riggs, as the author, seems to intervene in the limited first person narration. In this light, the language of Jacob's internal narration to the reader signifies a contradictory pairing of both author and character.

Another linguistic consideration lies in the genre itself. *Hollow City* is a young readers novel intended to both educate and entertain adolescent readers. Riggs, in his attempt to educate the reader, employs lofty vocabulary intended to challenge the reader. As he does when he uses metafiction when referring to the *Tales* and his own book as more than simple stories, Riggs tries to offer the reader more than entertainment. His sometimes elevated diction is his way of signaling that his book is more than an escapist story meant to tell the interesting tale of children with superpowers. The generic convention in which the *Peculiar Children* series operates allows Riggs to take on the role of the teacher as well as the storyteller, particularly in his language.

Structure

The author divides the novel into two parts. Part 1 follows Jacob and the children as they flee from the hollowgasts and the wights. After rescuing a peregrine falcon that they mistake for their mistress Miss Peregrine, they row from Whales to England and attempt to reach London. This first part focuses, initially, on introducing the children to



the reader. Since the cast of characters is large, much of the first section is devoted to giving the children a crude brush of personality traits. The overall tone of this passage is one of wry humor tinged with suspense. Despite the light manner of dialogue, the children are constantly on the run and must keep moving to avoid capture.

Despite the transitory nature of the first part, Riggs finds time to delve into the major characters, but largely ignores the others. Jacob and Emma's relationship becomes a counterpoint of the novel's development while the other children simply act as one line speaking guest stars. Besides their relationship, the author devotes Part 1 to the development of Jacob's power and his position in the group. Since Miss Peregrine's peculiar children had already established a hierarchy before Jacob's arrival, he acts as an unstable component to which some of the children react poorly.

Towards the end of Part 1, Riggs shifts his focus from a few characters and moves to delve into the complexities and backstories of each of the children in turn as they travel to London by train. In the final chapter of Part 1, each of the children tell their stories to each other and the reader finally receives information that fleshes these previously one dimensional characters into more believable people. This shift in tone and focus changes the novel's structure from a singular focus to a more nuanced and universal idea of the characters.

The chapters in Part 1 are roughly the same length just as in Part 2 the chapters are the same length as each other. Since the two parts are of equal length in page, the chapters in Part 1 are shorter on the whole because there are 7 chapters in Part 1 and 6 in Part 2. The greater chapter size in Part 2 allows Riggs to more fully develop the massive changes in plot that occur in this section. It is in Part 2 that the major rising action, the climax, and the falling action occur. Consequently, despite the same amount of pages, Part 2's fewer chapters give the reader a sense of the profundity of each chapter's events in a way that Part 1's structure cannot match.



Quotes

And lo! towards us coming in a boat/ An old man, grizzled with the hair of eld,/ Moaning:
Woe unto you, debased souls!

-- Dante (Epigraph paragraph 1)

Importance: A novel's epigraph is always important. In this case, as in most cases in which the author employs an epigraph, the epigraph introduces the novel's tone and comments upon the story's ensuing action. The use of Dante Alighieri's lines in Canto 3 from the *Inferno* offers the reader insight into the story's quirky and dark tone. The inclusion of the lines from one of the most read epics in history could mean that either the author will continue with a poetic epic or use these lines satirically. In this case, Riggs does a little of both. His book carries some of the weight that Dante's epic does, but it includes these lines also as a counterpoint to his light and sarcastic tone.

We rowed out through the harbor, past bobbing boats weeping rust from their seams,
past juries of silent seabirds roosting atop the barnacled remains of sunken docks...

-- Jacob (chapter 1 paragraph 1)

Importance: These are the first words of Jacob's narration. As such, they carry the weight of an introduction to the novel. Riggs uses poetic language, anthropomorphism, and gothic imagery all in one sentence. These facets in a single sentence reveal the novel's fascination with the complex and the literary. As the novel carries on from here, the introductory themes of decay and the importance of the journey expand.

Past fishermen who lowered their nets to stare frozenly as we slipped by, uncertain
whether we were real or imagined; a procession of waterborne ghosts, or ghosts soon
to be.

-- Jacob (chapter 1 paragraph 1)

Importance: These words are the latter part of the novel's massive first sentence. Here, the reader obtains the perspective of not only Jacob himself, but of the anonymous fishermen. Riggs gives two dichotomies in this quote. He introduces his fascination with the real versus the imagined and shows Jacob's foreboding sense of dread. Since the characters themselves are inherently imagined constructions of the author's mind, Riggs already begins to play with the nature of literature and the reader's role in the story.

After a few minutes we stopped, chests heaving to listen. The voices were still behind
us, only now they were joined by another sound: dogs barking. We ran on.

-- Jacob (chapter 2 paragraph 26)

Importance: The final words of Chapter 2 highlight the novel's cat and mouse format and the importance of suspense. Typical of novels that seek to cultivate suspense, Riggs finishes his second chapter with a cliffhanger that pushes the reader to continue the story. The sentences also underscore the children's feeling of despair because just when they believe themselves to be safe, they are anything but.



Why does everyone always leap to the awfulest conclusions right away?
-- Olive (chapter 3 paragraph 53)

Importance: Olive, the young girl who is so light that she floats away without her weighted shoes, asks the group why they are so pessimistic. Her use of the nonexistent superlative "awfulest" provides an ironic interlude to the other children's despairing manner. Instead of sinking into cynical depression like some of the others, she gives the reader a childish and humorous comment.

The dog took a long, satisfied puff and said, 'Best of luck to you, peculiar children.'
-- Addison (chapter 4 paragraph 62)

Importance: When Addison, the children's host at the peculiar menagerie, bid the children goodbye, he does so with a contagious melancholy. The dog does not believe the children will succeed and they do not. With the knowledge of the entire story, the reader can understand the foreboding in Addison's words. He wishes them the best of luck because he knows they will need it and because he knows how rare it is for peculiars to find luck in a world filled with monsters seeking to devour them.

Boots tromped by outside the cage, heavy and thudding, as if the wights sought to punish the very ground they walked upon.
-- Jacob (chapter 5 paragraph 27)

Importance: As the children hide in the bear cage in the gypsy camp, the wights scour the gypsy's tents searching for them. Here, the manner in which the wights walk receives commentary that the mundane act of walking usually does not deserve. Riggs's urge to layer his story with symbolism and actions with meaning gives the reader insight into the wights' personalities. They are not only monsters who wish to kill the children, they are purely cruel creatures that seek even to punish the ground upon which they tread.

She showed it to me and snickered, but I felt bad for the guy. He was guilty only of liking her, same as me.
-- Jacob (chapter 5 paragraph 49)

Importance: While enjoying the festivities of the gypsy camp, a boy gives Emma a picture of himself with a note attached to it. The shy boy then runs away and Emma shows the picture to Jacob and laughs. Despite Emma's lighthearted manner, Jacob recognizes too much of himself in the boy at whom Emma sneers. This quote shows the uneven relationship between Jacob and Emma.

Her grim expression seemed to say: What will become of me? We watched her go and wondered the same about ourselves.
-- Jacob (chapter 8 paragraph 14)

Importance: When the children meet Jessica, a girl about to board a train out of the bombarded London, they see something that they could never have. Jessica, as a non-



peculiar, is able to leave the war-torn city. On the other hand, the children cannot because they must try to save their ymbryne. Jessica represents an escape that the children cannot have.

From where we stood, arrested in awe on the cathedral steps, it looked as if the whole city had caught fire.

-- Jacob (chapter 10 paragraph 1)

Importance: As the children exit St. Paul's Cathedral in London, they see the Germans bombing the city and buildings ablaze. After just hearing the story from the Tales of the Peculiar in which that Cathedral itself burned to the ground more than once, their situation becomes all the more tenuous and dangerous. These lines seem to say that the great fires of London are not over and that history repeats itself through conflict and strife.

I am Balenciaga Wren, and I'm so pleased you're here.

-- Miss Wren (chapter 11 paragraph 54)

Importance: When Jacob and the rest of the children hear Miss Wren say these words, the relief they feel is immeasurable. After all the horror they had to face, they finally achieve their goal and find the one woman who is able to help Miss Peregrine. Although the ease that these words give, this relief does not last because the violent climax occurs soon afterwards in which the wights capture the peculiar children despite the protection of Miss Wren.

No, Dad. I'm peculiar.

-- Jacob (chapter 13 paragraph 82)

Importance: This moment is the first time that Jacob acknowledges who he is. Throughout the novel, he moves back and forth between feeling like a peculiar and then thinking about the normal life he lived. His father accuses him of being on drugs then he relents and says that whatever drugs Jacob is taking, Mr. and Mrs. Portman still love him and that he can come home. Jacob refuses his father with the incomplete sentence that ends in a definitive period. Jacob then admits to himself that he is truly one of the peculiar children.