

The Fall of Reach Study Guide

The Fall of Reach by Eric Nylund

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Plot Summary

The Fall of Reach is one of the novels in the Halo series by author Eric S. Nyland. The story follows the main character, John 117 as he is abducted from a school playground and turned into a Spartan or one of the elite fighting groups for the UNSC. Humans having been fighting the Covenant, the aliens, for at least 10 years when the novel opens. Dr. Halsey is brought in for a secret operation to find potential children to use to form the experimental Spartan squad. She chooses the children and invents the augmentation process necessary to create the super soldiers.

As The Spartans train, the war rages on between the humans and the aliens the Covenant manages to take out colony after colony of humankind. This is putting the human race at risk of extinction. Throughout the years, the Spartans continue to train and to receive newly improved tools and armor to make them faster, more intuitive and more effective in defeating the Covenant.

One of the problems is that the Covenant quickly adapts and advances in their technology. It is so quick that the humans cannot keep up. By the time the Spartans are sent out on their first real mission, not a training mission, the Covenant has managed to wipe out all of the outer human colonies. The UNSC and the Spartans are sent to prohibit the Covenant from reaching the inner colonies and Earth. When the Covenant launches an attack on planet Reach, where the main UNSC military complex is, the Spartans and some of the UNSC try to save it from falling into the hands of the Covenant, but the fall of Reach takes place against their will.



Prologue

Prologue Summary

It's 2025 and the Chief is leading the Blue Team and the Red Team into a battle. The plan is to have the Blue Team lure out the guard for the Covenant, which is their enemy, and which are aliens. When the Blue Team does this, then the Red Team is supposed to sneak through and plant a nuke device. The Blue Team and the Red Team are Spartans, which are the enemies of the Covenant. The Covenant uses dog-like machines called Grunts are their protectors. The Spartan manage to blow all of the Grunts up in their path to gaining entrance to the Covenant. Five Covenant Banshee fliers come in and start dropping bombs on the Spartans. The Spartan fire back and repel off the side of cliff when they detonate barrels with napalm in them. The five Banshees fall into the water below and no survivors emerge. The teams regroup on the beach. The Chief radios into Captain de Blanc that the enemy has been neutralizes and the Captain tells the Chief they are pulling his men out. The Chief and the rest of the Spartans fly out and dock on a ship orbiting in space. When the Chief arrives on the bridge of the ship with Captain de Blanc, they watch as the Covenant drops bombs and destroys the planet Jericho VII. The aliens from the Covenant, have been wiping out human colonies in the war for the last 10 years. The problem is that the Spartans can fight the aliens on the ground, but not in space.

Prologue Analysis

Even though the war between the Covenant and the Spartans has been waging for the last 10 years, it will reach a turning point as the novel unfolds. The prologue of the novel foreshadows the Chief putting his foot down and getting sick of the aliens killing off human colonies. It foreshadows the Chief assembling a special crew to final win the war against the Covenant.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Lieutenant Junior Grade Jacob Keyes and Dr. Halsey wake up from being in cryogenic tubes. The Lieutenant is on board with Dr. Halsey because the USNC requires at least one naval personnel to be on board a ship. Since Dr. Halsey is a civilian, the Lieutenant is accompanying her. Dr. Halsey tells the Lieutenant that their mission is to observe one six-year-old boy that might be of invaluable use to the USNC. The doctor also indicates she chose the Lieutenant for the mission because of an incident in his past where his superior made an error that killed and wounded all of his men, but the Lieutenant refused to testify against him. They prepare to land on Eridanus.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The Lieutenant finds Dr. Hadley attractive. This foreshadows that a romance will blossom between the two as the novel unfolds. The child whom they are going to observe, seems as if he will be a future soldier, fighting against the colonies to save the human colonies.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Dr. Halsey and the Lieutenant enter the school disguised as parents. They locate the boy they are there to observe. Dr. Halsey approaches the subject to test him in a coin toss game. After the game, Dr. Halsey leaves Number 117. She explains to the Lieutenant that she was testing the boy. She verifies with the Lieutenant that he recorded her interaction with the boy and they return to the ship.

Chapter 2 Analysis

The doctor is looking for subjects for her project. Somehow she has gotten a lead on Number 117. She tests him to verify that the information she has heard is true and correct.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

The Lieutenant has been assigned to another ship, so he is no longer working with Dr. Halsey. He has also been promoted. He was beginning to understand what Dr. Halsey was doing. She's now training the chosen boys to defend Earth and its colonies. John Number 117 is among them.

Chapter 3 Analysis

It foreshadows Dr. Halsey is trying to create an elite group of soldiers. She is hoping to help save the human race. It is however a secret as to how she is doing it.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Number 117 is woken up by being electrocuted by a baton. It's Mendez that is shouting at Number 117, also known as John, to get up out of bed. It's the first day of training for the 72 students that have been chosen. The kids workout so hard that John throws up. They are only given crackers to eat for lunch while they watch the 300 Spartans fight the Trojans on video. The children are grouped into teams of three, where on John's team, one of his team members is a girl. The winner of the competition gets to have a big dinner, while the loser doesn't get to eat dinner at all. John thinks the girl is going to slow them down, but she's actually faster than him and the other boy on their team. They end up winning.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The trainers are being so harsh on the students because they have to be able to make it through unimaginable conditions. These are the chosen few to help save the human colonies and Earth against the alien invasion. The students that make it through the training are symbolic of the 300 Spartans that won the war against the Trojans that outnumbered them.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

It's two years later. John is working with Sam and Kelly, both of his original team members from when he was in training. They are still in training and Mendez is still their trainer. John and 74 of the other child trainees are in board a drop ship. Mendez tells them they are dropping them all in the wilderness, that they have to make it to a pickup point and that one of them will be left behind. John drops into the wilderness first. All of the other children meet up with him there. When they get further into the wilderness, they find a group of men talking and smoking around a drop ship. They are not wearing uniforms so John doesn't think they are soldiers. The kids form a plan, defeat the men and take over the ship. John pulls up the AI system, whose name is DJ, and she outs the ship on autopilot to fly them home. None of the children are left behind.

John has to report to Mendez and Dr. Halsey to explain his actions on the mission. When Mendez asks Dr. Halsey what she's going to do with John, she says that she's going to make him a Squad Leader.

Chapter 5 Analysis

John is the unofficial leader of the child trainees. While Kelly is the fastest and Sam has the best hearing, John has a natural ability to lead. This is one of the reasons that he is one of the chosen few.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

It's six years later. Dr. Halsey is on a medical ship floating in space. She has DJ decode an encrypted report sent to her by the doctor's boss on the Spartan Project. The report lists all of the diverse side effects the chimpanzees are experiencing from the drugs they are injecting. Dr. Halsey joins Mendez in Room 117, where John is being sedated. The doctor notices that the 14-year-old boy has the physique of an Olympic athlete of 18. When John asks the doctor how to win this mission, she tells him that he has to survive.

Chapter 6 Analysis

It infers that the drugs that are currently being tested on the chimpanzees are the same drugs that will be injected into John and the other children that are being trained. It foreshadows the doctor having to work out changes to the experiment to limit the adverse side effects in humans. It also infers that they will proceed with the injections either way, which might cause the humans to become superhuman, but that this could have the opposite effect of what they are hoping to happen.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

John stands by with some of the other soldiers that survived their last mission as Mendez ejects the ashes of the soldiers that died into space. All of the survivors are suffering from various side effects of their augmentation. Some are so damaged, such as having their bones twisted and mangled, that they no longer look like humans. When John asks Mendez what he did wrong as the squad leader, Mendez says it's a part of being a soldier.

After recover, John heads toward the gym early in the morning to work out. At this point, there are 32 candidates left in his squad. Another 30 had washed out by dying during the augmentation process. Another dozen were reassigned to the Office of Naval Intelligence because they are suffering from the side effects of the process. John feels as if the room is rotating more slowly than usual, so he pulls a pin when one of the weight bars and runs a test with it. He realizes that is John that is rotating too slowly, not the room. In the process, four soldiers walk into the gym. When one of them uses the weight bar that John removed the pin from, the weights fall off and drop to the feet of another soldier. When John says it's his fault, the four soldiers try to attack him and John fights back. After he breaks one of their noses, one of their superiors comes into the gym. He tells them if they want to fight to get in the ring. John takes them all on, injuring two more and killing one of them. When Mendez enters, the Sergeant that made the soldiers get into the boxing ring asks Mendez if John is one of them. John thinks the fight was one of Mendez's missions.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The augmentation process involves injecting the child soldiers with drugs that are supposed to make them superhuman. This is so they will be able to stand up to the aliens and protect the humans in the war. Unfortunately, the negative side effects are so negative that it is causing some of the soldiers to die. It is causing others to experience malformation and disabilities beyond repair. The fight in the gym was not one of Mendez's missions. Instead, John killed and injured his fellow soldiers.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Dr. Halsey arrives in Mendez's office asking where the Spartans are. He explains they had to find new facilities for them to train. As he drives Halsey to Reach, a mountainous region, Mendez explains that the first day back in training, three of the trainees were accidentally killed during combat exercises.

When they arrive, Mendez takes Dr. Halsey into a room surrounded by glass so they can see on to what looks like a football field. Halsey watches as she sees Kelly and then John fight off their trainers using supernatural strength. Mendez updates Halsey on the speed, reaction times and the fact that the Spartans can practically see in the dark from their alterations. She asks if they are ready for combat because the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) wants to send them into battle.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The Spartans have aspired to heights that were never dreamed for them. Now, they will be put to the true test when they are sent into a real combat situation. The supernatural powers the Spartans have foreshadows them being able to take back control of the human colonies from the aliens and keeping the aliens from destroying any more of the human colonies that are left.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

The Spartans are assembled in a meeting room when Dr. Halsey and Mendez enter. Dr. Halsey informs the Spartans that they have been assigned to a mission: an insurgent base in the Eridanus System. The doctor explains that a previous battle stopped the insurgents, but that a group of rebels escaped and is believed to have built a base in a hollowed out asteroid. The Office of Naval Intelligence also believes that an insurgent sympathizer is leaking information to the rebels. The mission is to infiltrate one of the ships believed to be heading toward the rebel base. Once they are there, they are to capture the rebel leader to be brought back for questioning. John realizes that all 33 of the Spartans cannot go on the mission, so he decides to choose five or six. John chooses Kelly, Linda, Sam, and Fred to go on the mission with him. They choose a black body suit equipped with a helmet for communication, heating and cooling system and a 15-minute amount of oxygen. Three members of the group get the same caliber weapon so they can share ammunition. Linda and John also get assassin rifle. Once they are suited up and armed, they are ready to go.

Chapter 9 Analysis

John has assembled the best of the best of the Spartan to go on the mission. Since it is their first mission, it will put the group to the test to see how they perform in real-life situations. It foreshadows the group of five to become the best and the most infamous when they find the rebel base and takedown the rebel leader.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The five Spartans sneak onto the Laden, which is the ship that will take them to the rebel base. They set up in one of the water tanks aboard the ship. While they do not find any weapons on the ship manifest list, they do find items such as the cigars the leader likes to smoke, steaks, cheese and champagne. They decide if they follow these items, it will lead them directly to the leader of the rebels.

They sleep in four hour shifts. Kelly wakes John as the ship decelerates. They put the crew uniform over their black bodysuits and repel out of the water tank. The team locates the cigars in the bay of the ship. They walk out of the cargo bay and into the rebel base once the ship docks. John leads his team into the public showers on the base, where they discuss how to get off the base once they capture the Colonel. They decide to steal the Pelican that was parked in the docking station near the Laden when they walked off the ship. The team moves out of the showers and to the barracks building. Kelly and John overtake the two guards at the entrance. Kelly checks her computer pad for the marker she tagged the cigars with and suggests they are reaching the top floor of the building. Kelly and John take out the five additional guards that are inside the lobby of the building.

The crew limbs up the elevator cables and comes out through the elevator doors on the upper floor. They kill the guards that are there. There are two doors and the cigars are behind one of them. John kicks open the door to find a luxurious apartment. The crate of cigars and champagne are there, along with four men. One of the men is Colonel Watts, their target. The men fire on the Spartans and John takes a bullet to the stomach. While the rest of the crew fires back and takes out some of the men, John wrestles the pistol out of the Colonel's hand and chokes him nearly unconscious. Kelly sedates the Colonel with an injection. Kelly uses a sealing agent and some tape to seal John's bullet wound, which should hold back the bleeding for a couple of hours.

They put the Colonel in one of the crates and repel out the other door on the floor into the alley. They put the crew suits back on and walk back toward the docking station with the crate. They make it to the Pelican and send a couple of explosions behind them, killing some of the dockworkers and civilians on the rebel base. John has an uneasy feeling as they depart. It's a feeling he can't explain because they won and accomplished their mission.

Chapter 10 Analysis

John's uneasy feeling could be due to the fact that what the Spartans are being told isn't the truth. They only know the rebels are their enemies because that is what they are

told by Dr. Halsey and Mendez. John's uneasy feeling foreshadows more trouble ahead for the Spartan crew.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Back on planet Reach, the Spartans are called to muster in their dress uniforms. This is something they typically do for funerals, so John is wondering who died. John is also wearing the Purple Heart he was awarded after his last mission.

Admiral Stanforth enters and introduces the IA Beauwolf. He tells the Spartans about the Harvest colony and Beauwolf projects pictures onto the screen. An unidentified object was identified around the colony. When ships are sent in to investigate, some of these ships go missing. Pictures of the planet after reveal that is desert-like and barren, also indicating that the inhabitants are dead. The unidentified object is identified as an alien ship. The technology it possesses are far beyond that of the human fighters. The Admiral says the aliens didn't attack until the humans initiated contact with the ship. The alien race is identifying themselves as The Covenant.

The Admiral says the Spartan training will be advanced to its final stage and that Mendez is leaving them to train the next group of Spartans. Mendez says a few words and the Spartans stand to salute him. As the Spartans are dismissed, John approaches Mendez. Mendez asks John what the options are for enemies that are more fierce than the Spartans. John tells Mendez the two options. Mendez says there is a third option: surrender. This, however, is not an option for the Spartans, so Mendez warns John not to allow them to ever give up. Mendez returns the coin to John that Dr. Halsey had given him, and that was taken away during a fight with a trainer. Mendez says goodbye to John and John never sees him again.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Mendez is secretly sending a message to John about the mission the Spartans are about to embark upon. It suggests that the lost ships might have surrendered to the aliens. The message also indicates that this is something the Spartans should not do, but instead have to fight to defeat the aliens. John noticing that Dr. Halsey is aging suggests that she might pass away soon. This might have an adverse effect on the Spartans because she is the only one familiar with the augmentation work.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The Spartans are on the ship entering the system that will take them into their latest mission, Mjolnir. Dr. Halsey comes over the intercom calling John to the bridge. John tells the Spartans to get into uniform in case they are needed now. The doctor and one of the Captains on the bridge show John an object. They also tell John that something that wasn't revealed in the mission briefing is that when the aliens were first spotted, they were far away and then suddenly very close. John suggests it is some sort of space jumping, with which Halsey agrees. The alien ship starts firing on the Spartan ship. The Spartan ship fires back, but the alien ship seems to have a skin around it that protects it from the ammunition. The Captain orders the biggest weapon on the ship to be used: MAC. When the MAC hits the alien ship, the lights dim as if it has been hit. The force of the bomb should have stopped the ship, but the alien ship continues to come at the Spartan ship. The Captain tells them to prepare to fire again. The alien ship fires at the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth sustains additional damage. The Commonwealth manages to slow the Covenant ship down. They decide to have another ship pick up Halsey and the Spartans so the Commonwealth can return to planet for repairs and be the lure, if necessary, for the Covenant ship.

Chapter 12 Analysis

The Spartans are learning that the defenses they have used against the Covenant in the past are not working. The alien advances in technology is faster than that of the Spartans. The Spartans will need to quickly get up to speed with information on their enemy so that they can accomplish what those before them could not accomplish—to defeat the aliens and save humankind.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

The ship lands on the planet carrying the Spartans. They ride the elevator down to the training room. When they arrive in the training room, they find mannequins dressed in new armor. Dr. Halsey uses a schematic of the battle armor to illustrate the features of it to the Spartans. While the suit increases the speed and strength of the wearer, its drawback is that it crushes the wearer to death. Dr. Halsey explains that normal humans don't have the strength to wear the suit but the Spartans do. John tests the suit and trains on how to use it. They start fitting the suits onto the other Spartans and training them on how to use the suit. In 30 minutes of training, the Spartans know how to use the suits and are even faster and stronger than they have ever been before. The Captain of the Commonwealth calls in saying the alien ship is still pursuing them. He reports the damage to the Commonwealth and John says that they are ready to fight.

Chapter 13 Analysis

The new suits of armor are an advancement in human technology that only the inducted and augmented Spartans can wear. The suits will provide the Spartans with even more of an advantage in the fight against the aliens than they already had.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

John pilots the Pelican toward the Commonwealth. John asks Dr. Halsey for permission to attack the Covenant ship, she denies him, but John convinces her that the Spartans can win if they invade the ship. John asks for the Commonwealth to send out some decoys so the Spartans can enter through the hole of the reflective area of the alien ship. John, Kelly and Sam make it onto the alien ship. Kelly figures out the code to open the door of the ship. They run into a birdlike alien in the room. The alien screeches, the Spartans open fire and kill the alien. They walk further, Kelly opens another door and they run into an angry alien. When they try to shoot the alien, he has a protective shield up, and he opens fire on the Spartans. Sam is struck. John kicks the shield of the alien enough to jam his gun into the alien's mouth a fire. The three Spartans decide to blow up the ship and set a timer for long enough to escape. They realize Sam will not make it because of the gaping hole in his suit, so they have to leave him behind. John and Kelly say goodbye, set the timers, escape the alien ship, and watch as it blows to smithereines.

Chapter 14 Analysis

John chooses to take a proactive stance in defeating the alien ship. John finally understands the difference between losing a life and sacrificing one for the greater good when he has to leave Sam behind. John is also satisfied that the Spartans have the ability to defeat the aliens. Their strength, coupled with his grief and anger for the loss of Sam, will compel John to rage on with the battle and win the war.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Ensign Lovell is on one of the space stations. His job is to monitor for any alien ships. The space station where he is stationed has never registered any alien ships, which is why he requested to man this particular station. The computer makes the Ensign read and agree to comply with the policy as he signs on for duty. The policy states that when a station or ship is under attack by the Covenant, that all data must be destroyed. The Ensigns sees a foreign object in the distance, about two hours away. he decides it's probably not an alien ship because one has never been spotted here. He also decides against sending out probes to determine what the object is. Instead, he just puts up his feet on the console of the ship and waits.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Ensign Lovell is making fatal error. The unidentified object will turn out to be a Covenant ship. It will attack the Ensigns station and then move on to attack other vessels. At this point, all of the Outer Colonies have been destroyed. Once the Covenant ship gets past the station, it will start to work on destroying the Inner Colonies.



Chapters 16

Chapters 16 Summary

Commander Jacob Keyes is standing on the bridge of the Iroquois. Keyes is reading the outpost station's report of the large mass Ensign Lovell spotted. Commander Jacob Keyes agrees with Ensign Lovell's inclination that the mass is too large to be a Covenant ship, but Commander Jacob Keyes thinks the shape of the mass is familiar. Commander Jacob Keyes's first assignment was Dr. Halsey in observing children. The Commander looks at his database of Covenant ships and finds one that is a similar shape to the mass showing on his screen. The Commander dials into Admiral Stanforth and requests that all ships in the area rendezvous with the Iroquois. The Commander explains that the mass they're seeing is four Covenant ships overlapped in Slipspace. The Admiral commends the Commander and says he'll send all the help to the Iroquois he can.

The Commander calls for the Cole Protocol to be executed, which is the destruction of all of the ship's data so that it doesn't get into the hands of the aliens. When the Covenant ships come into view, the Commander realizes it is two frigates escorting a destroyer and carrier ship.

Chapters 16 Analysis

The Commander knows if the Covenant ships catch up with the Iroquois that the aliens can take the ship over. In an effort to keep the aliens from learning any sensitive information, the Commander orders all of the information to be destroyed. The Commander also knows that it might require them to self-destruct for the good of humankind. Because the destroyer alone is enough to eliminate the Iroquois, the Commander knows that death is imminent, which is the third option Mendez introduced to John when Mendez left as the Spartan training officer for John and his crew. The Commander plans on using a suicide bomber tactic by running the Iroquois directly into the Covenant ships.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

As the Covenant ships approach the Iroquois, one of the officers tells the Commander they are preparing to fire their plasma weapons. The Commander tells them to stay on course, but to prepare the weapons on the Iroquois. When the plasma missiles are a few seconds from hitting the Iroquois, the Commander commands they fire their MAC weapons, which will propel the Iroquois out of the course of the being hit by the enemy missiles. The alien missiles miss the Iroquois, but the other ships continue their course, heading straight toward the Iroquois.

The Commander gives the command to collide with the destroyer ship. Missiles hit the hull of the Covenant ship and sent it spiraling into orbit. Without power, the ship will explode. The Iroquois takes down another Covenant ship, leaving only the two frigates. They blow away the two frigates. An officer tells the Commander that the Covenant ship dropped more than 30 dropships that are heading to invade one of the colonies. The Commander says that it is time to call in the Marines.

Chapter 17 Analysis

The war is heating up. The Covenant is now trying to annihilate the inner colonies.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

The Commander is intrigued by the fact that the aliens dropped their ground forces and then retreated. The Commander inspects the damage to his ship and then starts to think about what to do for Jagers, the officer that almost didn't obey his orders during the fight with the Covenant ships. He decides to have Jagers transferred to a remote outpost. Admiral Stanforth comes to congratulate Keyes and promote him to Captain. Keyes lets the Admiral know that he needs to replace his bridge officer. Six hours later, the Admiral radios in that they have spotted 10 Covenant ships on the outskirts of the Inner Colonies.

Chapter 18 Analysis

The aliens dropping their ground forces and then retreating sets a false sense of safety to the Iroquois crew. When they are down trying to get the ship repaired, it foreshadows the aliens continuing to work and attack the Iroquois crew when they are vulnerable. Transferring Jagers to a remote outpost suggests he'll wind up the same watch station of the officer that allowed the Covenant ships to get to the Iroquois in the first place. Keyes is thinking about replacing Jagers with Lovell, which is ironic because Lovell was busted down in rank and assigned to the remote outpost because of insubordination.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Corporal Harland and his men are a marine unit fighting the Covenant on the ground. This is his first mission against the Covenant, but this time the aliens are shooting weapons that spread needles all over the place, wounding and killing his men. As the driver takes one of the wounded men and the Corporal back to base, they see that the Covenant, the Grunts, have totally destroyed the makeshift base they built. As they try to escape and follow the river up to HQ, the Covenant Banshees try to shoot them. The Corporal fires back at the Covenant while they drive to HQ. When they reach HQ, HQ has been attacked too. Some of the soldiers at HQ are still alive but most are dead. The Corporal radios for a medical evac. One Pelican soon lands on the planet. Out steps about a dozen soldiers in armor with black jumpsuits underneath.

Chapter 19 Analysis

It appears as if the Covenant is advancing in their technology and weaponry once again, leaving the UNSC behind. The Spartans have arrived to help the men that are left on the planet to fight and kill the Covenant.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

John takes control of the men that are still alive. He briefs them all on the plan to provide medical attention to the wounded and to plan an attack on the Covenant. The Blue Team runs into some Grunts that haven't spotted the Spartan yet but are heading straight for the Marine bunker. John orders the team to fight. As they kill some of the Grunts and move into the sewer system, John and his group run into aliens like they have never seen before. These are sluglike aliens with tentacles rather than bipeds.

One of the Spartan teams locates 20 human survivors, of which some are wounded. John has to change the plan because his instructions are that he cannot engage in taking out the Covenant if there are humans on the planet. When two of the teams are assigned to move the civilians off the planet to safety and for medical care, John tells the remaining teams to prepare the nukes.

Chapter 20 Analysis

John records the new alien species because the USNC will need to study it. The species seems to one that takes things apart and puts them back together again. This could be how the Covenant gets so technologically advanced. John telling the remaining teams to prepare the nuke foreshadows the Spartans that are left waging a major war against the Covenant.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

The Lieutenant tells Captain Keyes that they have made repairs to the Iroquois engines. He adds that they are the best repairs they could make under the circumstances. Ensign Lovell reports for duty on the Iroquois. The crew prepares the ship to move out of the docking station and back into space. The Covenant ships start to fire at the Iroquois when Admiral Stanforth comes on the screen. The Iroquois is able to hit several of the Covenant ships. The Captain thinks the Covenant ships are trying to distract the USNC ships from what is going on the planet.

Chapter 21 Analysis

The engines not being at full capacity will come to haunt the Iroquois crew, possibly even causing them to crash and die during a battle with the Covenant. When the Covenant ships disengage in battle, the Captain believes they have gotten what they came for but the USNC is simply not aware of what the aliens are up to.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Back on the planet, John is preparing missiles by adhering them to the walls of the sewer pipe for detonation. When John comes out of the sewer, the Jackals have their backs to him. John attacks and kills them. Kelly, James and John enter the museum, where the Jackals seems to be meeting and protecting some kind of a piece of granite. The Spartans blow the Jackals away but manage to save the rock. James is injured in the fight. They get back to the Pelican ship and take off.

Chapter 22 Analysis

The rock must have some kind of special power or significance to the aliens.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Captain Keyes is surveying the damage of his own ship, other ships and the casualties from the battle. Even with the major loss of lives, loss of ships and major damage to all of the ships in the fleet, the morale of Captain Keyes's crew seems to be higher and more confident. Captain Keyes attributes the boost in morale to the victory over the Covenant, which is but only one in three victories since the war began. Admiral Stanforth sends a memo to Keyes saying that both of their presence is requested at Reach with ONI for a briefing. While the Iroquois heads toward Reach, it flies through a bunch of space junk or debris floating around from the battle. What nobody onboard notices, is that one of the pieces of debris is some sort of technology that attaches itself to the ship and feeds data to the Covenant.

Chapter 23 Analysis

While the USNC is victorious over the Covenant, Captain Keyes has a nagging feeling that winning the battle was not the objective of the Covenant in the first place. He still believes that the Covenant was trying to distract the USNC so the Covenant could accomplish a goal that is still unknown to the USNC. The Covenant is going to defeat the USNC again when it comes to technology. The piece of technology that attaches to the Iroquois will act as a form of GPS, reporting the Iroquois location back to the Covenant.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

John returns to planet Reach. The guard at the gate directs John where to report. John reveals through his thoughts that the Spartan existence was a secret in the military until three years ago when Admiral Stanforth insisted on it going public as a morale booster. Corporal Harland greets Master Chief John inside of the military installation. When he asks John how to join the Spartans, John thinks that he never joined, but was chosen to be a Spartan 25 years earlier by Dr. Halsey. Captain Keyes comes in and he and John meet for the first time face-to-face. What John doesn't realize is that Captain Keyes was the man that went with Dr. Halsey on the first day they observed him as child in the school.

Before John enters the debriefing chamber, Captain Keyes warns John to keep his head down because the brass are not impressed with their handling of the recent battle. This confuses John because they won the battle against the Covenant. They ask John about the two new species of aliens they encountered while in battle, and if they interacted with the other members of the Covenant. They also ask John about the scanning device the granite stone seemed to be hooked up to prior to John retrieving the stone.

When John exits, he runs into Dr. Halsey, who congratulates him on his victory. She also mentions another battle to John. Then, she enters the debriefing room and John leaves.

Chapter 24 Analysis

The unidentified species seem to be new to the Covenant, as if the Covenant is forming some sort of caste system. From what the naval officers mention to John in the debriefing, it also seems as if the Covenant added some elements to the normal granite stone to make it into an information scanner. This points to the fact that the USNC might be on to something about some of the technology of the Covenant.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Dr. Halsey enters her underground office, far below the ground. The Ai tells her that she late. Dr. Halsey calls up the notes from the debriefing, in which she finds out the USNC has learned relatively nothing. She marvels at the fact that after 30 years on research that the USNC still knows nothing more about eh Covenant than they did when the war began.

Dr. Halsey pointed out to the officers during the debriefing that the unidentified alien species might be a new alien culture that they know nothing about. Something that pleases Dr. Halsey is that her Project MJOLNIR might have funding now to proceed. Cortana, another of Dr. Halsey's AIs, tells Dr. Halsey that the stone they found is similar to one of historic archaeological times. Cortana is a special IA because she is created from Dr. Halsey's own brain. Dr. Hasley allows Cortana to have Spartan 117. She then asks Cortana to pick a ship for the next mission. Cortana does. Finally, Dr. Hasley says they have to pick a captain and crew for the ship.

Chapter 25 Analysis

It seems as if an AI is going to be matched with each of the Spartans, which is why Cortana chooses John when Dr. Halsey asks her which one she wants. It seems as if the man Dr. Halsey suggests to Cortana as the captain for the ship for the next mission is Captain Keyes.



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

The two dozen remaining Spartans and Mendez are assembled in the amphitheater on planet Reach when Dr. Halsey and Captain Keyes come into the room. They are there to brief the Spartans on their next mission. On one screen, the doctor pulls up pictures of the Covenant ships. On another screen, she pulls up the different alien species, including the two new ones discovered during the recent battle.

The doctor explains that the Covenant species are numerous and that are imitative rather than innovative. She explains that each species is able to gather information from the naval ships and databases and then use this information to their advantage. The fact that the Covenant is able to do this at a much faster speed than the USNC is one of the reason it has been so difficult to stop the Covenant. She goes on to explain the mission the Spartans and the Captain will be partaking.

Dr. Halsey says that the Captain and his newly refitted ship will take over a Covenant vessel. The Spartans will then board the ship and take over their crew in order to find their home world. The Spartans will then take the captured ship to the homeworld of the Covenant. The final phase is to infiltrate the leadership, which they think are called prophets and return them to the USNC.

Dr. Halsey also reveals that the USNC only has about one year left until the Covenant destroys the inner colonies and reaches Earth. All of the Spartans volunteer when volunteers are requested for the mission.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Dr. Halsey is introducing an additional option to the Spartans, which doesn't involve winning the war, but doesn't involve losing it either. This option involves capturing, instead of killing, the Covenant leadership and trying to form a peace treaty with these Prophets to end the war.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

John arrives at the shooting range but finds it eerily quiet. He is escorted by some MPs into the prefabricated structure where he is swabbed with a foul-smelling liquid. Dr. Halsey explains that they need to update his neural interface. When the update is complete, the doctor leads John in a paper hospital gown into a separate area in the building where he will be fitted into his new MJOLNIR armor.

The doctor explains that they have made hundreds of improvements from the old suits to the new suits. One of the major improvements to the suit is the addition of an AI. In John's case, it is the addition of Cortana. John feels a pain in his head and then can hear the voice of Cortana in his helmet speakers and directly in his mind. The doctor tells John that his mission in the test of the new suit is to get through the obstacle course, eliminating anyone and anything that gets in his way and to ring the bell at the end of the course. John starts to defeat the Marines on his own. Eventually, Cortana helps him with strategy updates and they make it through the course together.

Chapter 27 Analysis

John believes that with his abilities and the abilities of Cortana, he finally has the tool he needs to defeat the Covenant.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

Cortana is helping Captain Keyes and his crew check on the workings of their new ship, the Pillar of Autumn's. For one, she bank wires money from the Colonel's personal account to a brothel and sends a notification to his home, in hopes his wife will see it. She also sends an email from the Colonel requesting reassignment to the field. Cortana also looks at John's service records, but notices that all of his information is missing from before he became a Spartan.

While Dr. Halsey is having a retina scan to log into her laboratory, Cortana intercepts the scan and sends her own copy of the doctor's retinal scans. When Cortana gets into the database as Dr. Halsey, she quickly retrieves John's personnel file and copies it before Dr. Halsey can override the scan with her voice recognition. Cortana learns everything about John and the truth about the Spartans and Dr. Halsey.

Chapter 28 Analysis

There is an inference that while Cortana is checking the ship's databases that she also does something to get revenge on ONI, specifically on Colonel Ackerson. Cortana is going to uncover the secret of the Spartans, which is they are children that are stolen from schools and turned into Spartans with augmentations.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Captain Keyes is inspecting the refitting job of his vessel. He finds slipshod work and starts to doubt himself for signing on to the mission. When he returns from inspecting the outside of the ship, Lieutenant Hikowa takes him on a tour of the inside of the ship. He finds out that his ship is the first one to receive new reactors. Captain Keyes starts to think about how helped Dr. Halsey to procure the Spartans 25 years ago. While he now believes the Spartans are the best for battle, the kidnapping of the children that they turned into Spartans still haunts him. The Captain takes quick tour of the cargo bay that has been turned into barracks for the Spartans. John introduces himself to the Captain and apologizes for him not knowing of their arrival. John says the Admiral didn't want any transmission of the Spartans' arrival on the radio. A message comes in from headquarters telling the Captain that they are under attack by the Covenant.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Keyes has been keeping Dr. Halsey's secret all of these years. He feels guilty but his payback for keeping her secret is that Dr. Halsey made it possible to command the ship and the mission he is on now. Ironically, it is Keyes's old ship, the Iroquois, that have led the Covenant directly to the USNC headquarters, which are now under attack.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

A top secret memo reads that the information records have been destroyed to make it appear as if the ship, *Circumference*, never existed.

Chapter 30 Analysis

The Covenant must have infiltrated the systems of the *Iroquois* as a way to get into the USNC systems. This has permitted the Covenant to destroy all of the data for one of the ships, making it seem as if it never existed.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Chief McRobb and his crew are monitoring space surrounding planet Reach. It is their job to protect the planet and the Reach Military Complex, which is the heart of USNC operations, from attack. They notice an unidentified object on the screen that has somehow managed to make its way into Slipstream space. McRobb realizes that it is the only object that has made it into Slipstream since the attack on Sigma Octanus, which is the planet where the Spartans brought back the granite rock from and gave it to the Military Complex on planet Reach. McRobb calls for the crew to implement Cole Protocol. As hundreds of Covenant ships accelerate toward them, McRobb says they've done everything and there is just one more order to carry out.

Chapter 31 Analysis

McRobb realizes that the unidentified object in Slipstream space is the Covenant. He is implementing the Cole Protocol to destroy the data onboard his vessel so that it doesn't get into the hands of the Covenant. McRobb is about to implement the plan where they sacrifice their own lives in an attempt to save the rest of Reach and the USNC.



Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

John and the other Spartans feel the change in course of the Pillar of Autumn. John asks Cortana what is happening, but the Captain intercoms John and says there has been a change in plans and he's on his way down to explain it to John in person. The Captain shows John and the Spartans the memo that all ships in the area have been recalled and that they must implement the Cole Protocol because Reach is under attack by the Covenant. John suggests that there will be Covenant ships that are disabled during the battle and that they should choose one for the Spartans to get aboard and take over. The Captain agrees to allow this if they come across a disabled Covenant ship and are not blown to pieces before they reach planet Reach. John tells the Spartans to prepare. Kelly asks John if he ever feels like these missions are like Mendez's missions, where there is a trick to them. John says yes.

Chapter 32 Analysis

The Spartans feel as if something bad is going to happen in this particular battle with the Covenant. This is the first time the Covenant has gotten so close to their Inner Colonies, especially the Military Complex on Reach. The fate of humankind is now in the hands of the USNC and the Spartans. It is up to them to stop the Covenant or humankind could come to end forever.



Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

Several small Covenant ships try to attack the Pillar of Autumn. The vessel moves so that nine of the Covenant ships miss an asteroid but one of the ships plows right into it. Now, the Pillar of Autumn is facing the Covenant carrier ship that launched the smaller ships in the first place. With Cortana's help as the AI for the ship, she positions the Pillar of Autumn to concentrate on getting rid of the Covenant ships that are focusing on attacking the hull of the Pillar of Autumn. The ship is able to fire and destroy the remaining nine Covenant ships that came from the carrier ship. Three shots from the MAC gun of the Pillar of Autumn reach the Covenant carrier. The first two break through the shield around the ship so that the third shot hits and guts the Covenant ship. The Covenant ship crashes and burns into the asteroid the Pillar of Autumn swerved to miss earlier and the Captain sighs in relief for their victory.

On the screen, as they approach the meeting point, the Captain sees that the Covenant ships outnumber the UNSC three to one. Their only chance to defeat and stop the Covenant is the Super MAC weapons that are on planet Reach. The Super MAC rounds are able to break through the Covenant ship shields and destroy some of the ships. Others, however, are able to shake off the rounds without any damage. The Covenant ships target the Super MAC guns and are able to destroy five and leave 15 standing. As the Covenant ships retreat, Keyes asks Cortana for the damage reports. She says only 20 UNSC ships are intact. Again, Keyes thinks that it's odd the Covenant retreats, similar to what they did in the Sigma Octanus battle. Captain Keyes tells Cortana to warn HQ that they are under attack—that the retreat from the Covenant was just a diversion. When they make radio contact with planet Reach, they find out that the Covenant has reached the ground, they hear screaming and bones crushing and then the signal goes dead. Cortana tells the Captain she has another transmission from another AI and it's worse than what they just heard.

Chapter 33 Analysis

John and Captain Keyes's intuition that the Covenant was acting strange and up to something is correct. The Covenant is using diversionary tactics to infiltrate areas of the UNSC that they have never been able to infiltrate before. At this rate, the human race is doomed to become extinct in less than three months.



Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

John rereads the distress call from the ship the *Circumference*, which says the Covenant has detected the ship and that there is a violation of the Cole Protocol. John understands that the Covenant is groundside on planet Reach to destroy the Super MAC weapons and they are infiltrating the *Circumference* data systems to find out where every human colony is to destroy it. The Captain consults John on how to handle the mission. John says the Spartans are trained for this and will split into two groups. One group will handle the ground invasion while the other will handle protecting the data on the *Circumference*. As John maneuvers one of the Pelican ships into the Slipstream, a Covenant ship immediately appears right in front of the Pelican's nose.

Chapter 34 Analysis

Once again, the Covenant's technology and ability to move their ships in lightning speed is against the UNSC. The Covenant ship has suddenly appeared in front of the Pelican, which is not as equipped at the Covenant ship. John and his crew are in for a fight as they never experienced before.



Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

John acts quickly and reverses the Pelican as fast as he can to put some distance between them and the Covenant frigate. The ship seems to be ignoring the Pelican and two other alien ships approaching the frigate seem to be ignoring it too. John crash lands the ship onto one of the USNC docking station. The Spartans take their ammunition and exit the Pelican. They see the Covenant ships are alive now and aliens dressed in armor have exited the ships and are heading toward the Spartans. John decides this is the elite class of alien soldiers Dr. Halsey briefed them on. Linda is able to shoot and kill one of the approaching aliens in their armored suits. The aliens start to fire their needles at the Spartans. When the needles embed themselves, they then explode. Linda and John assume James is dead from the explosion. A flower-like pod lands and Jackals emerge from it. Linda and John make a plan to get off the docking station. Linda aims her weapon on the weak points of the Jackals and kills three of them, sending the rest to take cover back inside the pod. Linda secures the pod as John tries to make his way back to the Pelican, but finds that the Covenant are crawling all over the docking station. Linda pulls John inside the pod. The Covenant detonates a bomb that blows up the Pelican, but also blows a crater in the decks of the docking station. John consults the blueprints and determines where the ship the Circumference should be so that he and Linda can get away.

John uses his probe to look around the corner. He sees a group of Marines fighting with Jackals near some Pelicans and a private aircraft. John tells Linda to take out the Jackals while he heads to the Circumference. John runs into an Elite alien on his way and jumps the alien and smashes its weapon out of the alien's hands before he can fire at John. John and the alien struggle with each other and the alien gets away and is able to retrieve its plasma gun. They struggle over the weapon, but John is able to destroy the Elite's shield and blow the alien away. John returns to Linda and finds her still fighting off Jackals. He tells her reinforcements are on their way. She says they've already arrived and they are learning how she's killing them, so they are adjusting their shields to protect themselves. Captain Keyes radios in that they are five minutes away from picking up John and Linda and that they must destroy the Circumference database. The Captain says time is running out, but it has already run out.

Chapter 35 Analysis

At this point, the only thing standing between the aliens and the destruction of humankind is the Spartans. The problem is that the aliens far outnumber the Spartans and the USNC in general. Whenever this is the situation in the past, the humans lose. It foreshadows the end of humankind.



Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

The plan starts to fall apart as soon as it is set. Covenant ships start to surround the Pillar of Autumn. The crew radios into the Reach and the Super MACs fire and destroy one of the Covenant ships. As the MACs try to fire at the remaining ships, one of the ships destroys two more Super MAC guns, leaving an unlucky 13 left. The Pillar of Autumn fires at the Covenant ship and the Covenant ship fires and hits the Pillar of Autumn. Eventually, the Covenant ship disappears. They Captain and Cortana receive a transmission from Reach that indicates the Covenant are invading by the hundreds. The Captain orders to the ship to head to port for repair while asking Cortana to get the Spartans online so he can warn them on what they are about to encounter.

Chapter 36 Analysis

Captain Keyes believes he understands the Covenant's new fighting strategy. Unfortunately, the UNSC is outnumbered, so they are winning some battles, but it probably won't win them the overall war. It seems as if the Covenant is engaging the UNSC ships in battles to get their attention away from Reach. Once the Covenant takes over Reach and destroys the Super MACs, the aliens can then enjoy utter domination.



Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

Master Chief John gives the Marines orders to straighten out their sloppy firing. John gets to the Pelican while Linda and the Marines manage to kill some additional aliens. He orders them all to pile in and uses the Pelican to fire at the Circumference to open the hull of the ship. John gets inside to the database panel to destroy the data and save planet Earth. Linda goes out to manually open the hatch doors so John can fly the Pelican out when he returns to the ship. John kills some additional aliens. Before John can warn her about the aliens, Linda takes three shots. The Marines pull Linda into the Pelican. John orders one of the Marines to take over while he goes to Linda. When Linda finds out he destroyed the database in the Circumference, she says they won and dies.

John docks the Pelican to the Pillar of Autumn and sends Linda to be frozen so that she might be saved later. John reports the success of his mission to Captain Keyes. John finds out the Captain lost contact with the other team of Spartans and they won't be picking them up. John asks to pilot a ship to find them but the Captain denies his request.

Chapter 37 Analysis

John might just be the last of the Spartans that is still alive. As Cortana's hologram has symbols rush over her body. John thinks he recognizes the symbols. It suggests that they are the same symbols that he saw on Covenant materials.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

Cortana thinks about John saying he thought he had seen the symbols before. She thinks that John is correct because they are the same symbols John saw when he boarded the Covenant ship in 2525 and on the granite rock he retrieved from the Covenant. When Cortana compares these symbols to star formations, she finds startling similarities.

As the ship is entering normal space, Cortana wakes the Captain and crew from their cryo sleep. The crew encounters a ring that Cortana scans and determines is artificial. She says it doesn't match any known Covenant objects. When Cortana says she doesn't know what the ring is, the Captain says that they better find out.

Epilogue Analysis

The crew has reached an artificial ring orbiting in space. The novel ends here, presumably to leave the opening for another novel in the series.



Characters

Dr. Halsey

Dr. Halsey is a civilian specialist. At the start of the novel, Dr. Halsey is aboard the *Hans* with Lieutenant Keyes. Keyes is there to pilot the vessel and to protect Dr. Halsey from harm. Dr. Halsey is a civilian, but she is working on a mission with the military, the USNC.

She has very pale skin and dark hair. She also has blue eyes. At the beginning of the novel, she is relatively young and slender. Lieutenant Keyes thinks of her as a striking woman. As the novel continues, Dr. Halsey ages. Toward the end of the novel, Spartan John, who is Master Chief by then, notices that she has aged significantly. Her dark hair turns gray.

Dr. Halsey is working with the military to create super-soldiers. She is genetically augmenting the children she chooses and abducts from their lives. John 117 is one of the children Dr. Halsey chooses. She uses the augmentation process to create soldiers that are tougher, faster, and more intelligent than the average human soldier. The concept is supposed to help the humans win the war against the aliens.

Number 117—John—Spartan—Master Chief

At the start of the novel, Number 117 John is a child on the playground of the Elysium City Primary Education Facility No. 119. Dr. Halsey observes John to decide if he is a potential candidate for her project to turn humans into super-soldiers—into Spartans. Number 117 is abducted from his school and put into the training program to become a Spartan.

John spends years of his life training as a Spartan. He undergoes the augmentation process Dr. Halsey has invented to give John super-human strength, speed and more. John emerges as the leader of the Spartans. When the Spartans go on training missions, they all look to John as their leader and to provide them with commands and information on how to perform the mission.

As the years go by, John remains the Spartan leader. Eventually, he is sent, along with four of the other Spartans of his choosing, on their first real mission. John successfully leads the Spartans through completing their first mission. The second real mission John and his Spartans undertake is keeping the planet Reach from falling to the aliens, the Covenant.

By the end of the novel, John has not saved Reach from falling to the aliens. He ends up on a vessel that encounters a ring floating in space instead.



Jacob Keyes

Jacob Keyes is the Lieutenant that is assigned to pilot Dr. Halsey's vessel and protect her at the beginning of the novel. He also accompanies Dr. Halsey onto the school playground to observe and run a test of Number 117, which is John. Keyes's naval personnel record is less than stellar. He is busted down in rank at the beginning of the novel for refusing to testify against his commanding officer.

Her record for keeping a secret and remaining loyal to his commanding officer, even against adversity, is the reason Dr. Halsey chooses him to escort her. Keyes works his way back up in rank over the years. He is the captain of the Iroquois when Halsey chooses him again to pilot the ship, Pillar of Autumn, for a new Spartan mission.

Deja

Deja is the AI, or Artificial Intelligence, that runs the Han for Dr. Halsey. Deja helps Dr. Halsey by running database scans. Déjà also puts up pictures, graphics and other information on the screen for Dr. Halsey's review. Dr. Halsey created Deja for the purpose of the Spartan Project.

When Deja appears, she is a hologram. She looks like a Greek Goddess. She has white hair and she wears a toga and no shoes. Number 117's first experience working with an AI is when he works with Deja.

Kelly

Kelly 087 is one of the children that is chosen to train as a Spartan. She is assigned originally to John's team when Dr. Halsey starts to train them as Spartans. John thinks that having a girl on their team is going to slow him and his other teammate down, and potentially cause them to lose. Kelly, however, is extremely fast and accurate, which helps John's team to win the competition. Kelly continues on as a Spartan with John and is often used in training missions and real missions because of her agility and speed.

Sam

Sam, or Samuel 034 is another child that is chosen to train as a Spartan. Sam is on John's original team when they first start training as children. Sam's hair is sandy blonde and he has green eyes. Sam is also one of the Spartans John chooses for their first real life mission.

Sam recovers the fastest of the Spartans from the side effects of the augmentation process. He is also the strongest of the Spartans. As adults, Sam is taller than John. Sam is shot on one of their missions and Kelly and John have to leave him behind.



Sam's death is what convinces John that the Covenant is not invincible, but it did cost the Spartans Sam's life.

Chief Mendez

Chief Mendez is the one in charge of training the Spartans. Mendez is known for sending the Spartans on training missions that have a twist or trick to them. When the Spartans are sent on their first real mission, Chief Mendez is relieved of being their leader to go and train the new set of Spartans.

James

James is one of the Spartans. He is chosen by John to go one of the real missions the Spartans have. James is injured in a fight against the aliens and loses consciousness. James loses his hand in the battle but he never gives up. Later, in a battle against the Covenant, James is shot with the needle weapons the aliens use. When the needles embed into his helmet, they explode, killing James.

Ensign Lovell

Ensign Lovell is assigned to the outpost, Archimedes. Lovell never finished the Naval Academy training, which is why he thinks he has been assigned to the third shift of the outpost. While he did move up in rank in previous years of his career, he lost his rank because of insubordination. Ensign Lovell reads the memo that spells out the details of the Cole Protocol, which is the first time it is introduced to the reader. Lovell is the first one to spot the unknown form approaching the inner colonies, but dismisses it as space junk because it doesn't match the shape or size of any known Covenant vessels. Keyes hires Lovell to work on the Pillar of Autumn.

Cortana

Cortana is an AI. She is slender and is navy blue or lavender in color. She has short hair and a hard-angled face. When Cortana was created, the best ONI insurgency software and code-cracking skills were used. She is easily bored, because she is so intelligent, which cause Cortana to break into databases and various ONI information sources. Cortana is also built using Dr. Halsey's brain, so in a way she is a piece of or extension of Dr. Halsey. When AIs are added to the Spartan armor, Cortana chooses to work with Master Chief John. Cortana is also the AI that pilot the Pillar of Autumn.



Objects/Places

Eridanus

Eridanus is an area in space that sits on the border of the inner colonies, where human colonies still exist. Eridanus is slightly off the beaten path, so it attracts pirates. In the beginning of the novel, the shuttle Han that Dr. Halsey and Lieutenant Keyes are on is about to enter the Eridanus system.

Han

The Han is a diplomatic space shuttle or vessel. In the beginning of the novel, Dr. Halsey and Lieutenant Keyes are onboard the Han. The Han is about to enter the Eridanus system. They use the ship to take them to the area where they observe Number 117 at his school.

Elysium City Primary Education Facility No. 119

Elysium City Primary Education Facility No. 119 is a school in the Eridanus star system. Dr. Halsey and Lieutenant Keyes arrive at the school disguised as the parents of a prospective student. The two are really there to observe Number 117, which is John as a child. Dr. Halsey approaches John on the playground to give him a test, in the form of a coin tossing game, while Lieutenant Keyes stands to side and videotapes the interaction.

Reach Military Complex

Reach is a planet inhabited by humans. It is also the location of the main military complex for the UNSC. During their training, the military complex is where John and the other Spartans-in-training conduct their training sessions and training missions. While working out in the gym in the complex, John encounters some soldiers in some of the elite forces for the UNSC. He fights the men on his own, killing one and injuring the others.

This is the same military complex that comes under attack by the Covenant at the end of the novel. Part of the mission of the Spartans is to try to protect the planet Reach from falling to the aliens. While they do not succeed in this, the Spartans are able to help the UNSC to implement the Cole Protocol, which is to destroy database and classified information on the UNSC ships and in the military complex so that it doesn't get in the hands of the Covenant.



Banshee

A banshee is the air fighters for the Covenant. It's not quite clear if the banshees are planes that are flown by an alien species or if the banshee is an alien that flies and drops bombs when fighting the USNC and destroying human colonies.

Jackal

A Jackal is one of the species of aliens. They fight for the Covenant. They have vulture-like heads.

Grunts

The Grunts are another of the alien species. The Grunts also fight for the Covenant. They have bark-like screams. The Grunts appear to the ground forces of the Covenant. They are heavily armed with needle guns, cannons and plasma guns.

MACs

MACs are a super-powered weapon used by the USNC. Super MACs are installed at the military complex on Reach to help protect the planet from invasion by the Covenant. These weapons are the only weapons that seem to penetrate the protective shield that the Covenant ships have around them. When the Covenant attacks Reach, they seem to be trying to destroy these weapons because they know it is the only way to make Reach fall.

Needlers

The needlers are one of the guns the Covenant use in combat. They are a type of gun that shoots plasma needles instead of bullets. When the needles shoot out of the guns, they embed themselves into things. After they embed, the needles explode.

Pillar of Autumn

The Pillar of Autumn is a refurbished ship. Captain Keyes is in charge of the ship. Cortana is the AI and Ensign Lovell is also assigned to work on the ship. It is one of the vessels engaged in combat with the Covenant as it tries to bring down Reach. It is also the vessel that encounters the mysterious ring as it enters space.



Themes

Good versus Evil

The primary plot throughout the entire novel is that of good versus evil. Primarily, this is related to the war between the aliens and the humans. The Covenant, which are the aliens, are trying to wipe out human civilization.

Dr. Halsey also walks the line between good and evil. On the evil side, she kidnaps children in order to find the members she needs and wants to train for her Spartan project. While this is for the good of human civilization, Dr. Halsey is responsible for ripping children away from their families and everything they. Additionally, the augmentation she makes to the children to turn them into Spartans is also questionable. In some cases, the Spartans are mangled, deformed and even killed from the side effects of the augmentation process.

Even Cortana, who is an AI, questions whether what Dr. Halsey is doing is good or evil. Cortana thinks that kidnapping the children makes Dr. Halsey truly evil. Cortana also questions whether someone who has done everything Dr. Halsey has done to help the humans combat the Covenant could truly be that evil.

In the end, it seems as if evil has won out over good. The Covenant has reached planet Reach, which means that they are destroying the inner colonies and might even reach Earth. The humans onboard the Pillar of Autumn might be some of the only humans that remain.

Coming of Age

One of the primary themes that run throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age, even against adversity, such as having to fight battles in a war. John struggles with the fact that his coming of age requires him to act as the leader of the Spartans. In his role as the Master Chief, John must lead the other Spartans into a battle that allows them to stop the Covenant.

During his coming of age, John looks to Mendez and Dr. Halsey for advice. They are both older and have more experience than John. While John knows what kind of sacrifices he is expected to make as he trains to be a Spartan, it also means that he misses out on any kind of a normal life that he could have had. On the other hand, John knows that his coming of age requires him to fight for humankind because otherwise there might not be anything to live for after all.



Friendships/Relationships

Friendships and relationships are a third major theme that runs throughout the novel. There is the line that separates the two sides of the war - the humans and the aliens - the USNC and the Covenant. Second, there are even class separations among the Covenant as well as the ranks of those in the military for the human population.

John seems to have a demeanor that makes him a natural leader for the Spartans. Some of the Spartans work so well together that they make top-notch teams, such as Kelly, John, Sam, and James. Even as a boy, Dr. Halsey recognizes that John is not the strongest, fastest or smartest of the Spartans, but that he possesses an innate sense to lead.

In the end, John's mindset requires him to sacrifice some of his friendships and working relationships for the sake of mankind. In one situation, it causes John to give up Sam's life for the good of humankind. In another situation, it causes John and his team to sacrifice James's life in order to defeat the Covenant.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third-person point of view from the perspective of the author and narrator of the novel. The novel swings back and forth between the present and the past. The present represents the time when the characters are in the later years and more advanced stages of the war between the humans and the Covenant. The past represents the earlier years of the war and the time leading up to the founding of the Spartans.

The point of view of this novel is intimate, allowing a reader to connect closely with each of the main characters, including Dr. Halsey and John. The book written in this manner allows the reader to get inside each of the character's heads, thoughts and inner struggles. The reader cares what happens characters, such as John and DR. Halsey, even though they have struggles between good and evil. The point of view also allows the author to inject his own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place around the other characters and the occurrences taking place.

Setting

The novel is set primarily in space where there are inner and outer colonies of humans. The setting includes several planets and star systems where the humans live. Additionally, several portions of the novel take place aboard the various vessels that the UNSC uses to travel and defeat the Covenant. The novel is set in the future, starting in 2522 and spans across a 30 year period to 2552. The main characters are involved in the war between the humans and the aliens—also known as the Covenant.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware that the character that seems one of the most innocent characters, Dr. Halsey, is possibly one of the most powerful. However, as events unfold, Dr. Halsey's role is a constant part of the plot, the lives of the characters and even the outcome of the novel.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is relatively simple and easy to read. The author, however, interjects many foreign and made up words to fit into the setting of the novel, which is in the future and of the science fiction genre. The language is descriptive enough that it helps to explain the situations, but is not always detailed enough for the reader to truly understand.

Structure

The novel is divided into a prologue, 37 chapters, and an epilogue. The length of each chapter ranges from two pages to 20 pages long. The chapters tell the story primarily in exposition and with some dialogue. The narrator injects his own voice and thoughts throughout the book, providing his opinions and feelings of the events unfolding in the novel.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot is the struggle of human beings in choosing between good and evil. One subplot is the coming of age of each of the characters. Another subplot is the relationships that the characters form amongst each other.



Quotes

"Mission accomplished, Captain de Blanc. Enemy neutralized" (Epilogue, p. 6).

"This is a reconnaissance mission...of sorts. We are here to observe a child. The first of many, I hope" (Chapter 1, p. 12).

"That's our boy" (Chapter 2, p. 18).

"Any story fabricated to motivate the children—claiming their parents were taken and killed by pirates, or by a plague that devastated their planet—if they learned the truth later, they would turn against us" (Chapter 3, p. 24).

"You win dinner, Number 117. Tonight, dinner is roast turkey, gravy and mashed potatoes, corn on the cob, brownies, and ice cream" (Chapter 4, p. 31).

"I don't want any of the Chief's surprises sneaking up on us" (Chapter 5, p. 37).

"I have been over the ONI projections of Outer Colony stability three times, Doctor. Their conclusion is correct: massive rebellion within twenty years unless drastic military action is taken. And you know the 'drastic military action' the brass would like. The SPARTANS are our only option to avoid overwhelming civilian losses. They will be the perfect pinpoint strike force. They can prevent a civil war" (Chapter 6, p. 46).

"A leader must be ready to send the soldiers under his command to their deaths" (Chapter 7, p. 50).

"They can no longer train here, ma'am. We had to find them...other facilities" (Chapter 8, p. 56).

"Your mission is to infiltrate the rebel base, capture Watts, and return him—alive and unharmed—to UNSC-controlled space. This will deprive the rebels of their new leadership. And it will provide ONI a chance to interrogate Watts and root out traitors within FLEETCOM" (Chapter 9, p. 63).

"What could be wrong? We won" (Chapter 10, p. 78).



"These weapons and defensive systems are currently beyond our technology. Therefore... this craft is of nonhuman origin." He paused, then added, "The product of a race with technology far in advance of our own" (Chapter 11, p. 82).

"Plasma. But not any plasma we know...they can actually guide its trajectory through space, without any detectable mechanism. Amazing" (Chapter 12, p. 92).

"The armor's shell is a multilayer alloy of remarkable strength. We recently added a refractive coating to disperse incoming energy weapon attacks—to counter our new enemies. Each battlesuit also has a gel-filled layer to regulate temperature; this layer can reactively change in density. Against the skin of the operator, there is a moisture-absorbing cloth suit, and biomonitors that constantly adjust the suit's temperature and fit. There's also an onboard computer that interfaces with your standard-issue neural implant" (Chapter 13, p. 95).

"And if we don't succeed, then power down your systems and wait for UNSC reinforcements to retrieve you. Live to fight another day. Don't waste your lives" (Chapter 14, p. 102).

"Oh no" (Chapter 15, p. 113).

"You've fought the Covenant, sir. You know how precisely they can maneuver their ships through the Slipstream. I've seen a dozen alien craft appear in normal space, in perfect formation, not a kilometer apart" (Chapter 16, p. 119).

"Get FLEETCOM ASAP. Time to send in the Marines" (Chapter 17, p. 129).

"Well, sir...this isn't the way the Covenant normally operates. Dropping an invasion force and leaving the system? They either slaughter everything or die trying. This is something altogether different" (Chapter 18, p. 135).

"Covenant hit us hard, sir. They had tanks, air support—thousands of those little Grunt guys. They glassed the main barracks. The Command Office. Almost got the munitions bunker" (Chapter 19, p. 144).

"We have survivors. Twenty civilians hid in a cargo ship here. There are several wounded" (Chapter 20, p. 156).



"I think we actually...won that one" (Chapter 21, p. 167).

"We're going in. Use your silencers. Don't engage the enemy unless absolutely necessary. This place is too hot. We'll just poke our noses in—see what they're up to and bug out" (Chapter 22, p. 169).

"Lieutenant Hall: start organizing shore leave for the crew. We're heading back for repairs and some well-deserved R and R" (Chapter 23, p.180).

"Forty years ago a geological survey team on Sigma Octanus Four found several igneous rocks with similar—though not identical—anomalous compositions. UNSC geologists believe that these samples were introduced onto the planet via meteorite impacts—they typically are found in long-eroded impact craters on the planet surface. Isotopic dating of the site place those impact craters at present minus sixty thousand years—though that figure may be inaccurate due to human error, of course" (Chapter 24, p. 194).

"The Covenant are still largely unknown to us. Their motivations and thought processes remain a mystery—though our best analysis points to some compelling hypotheses" (Chapter 25, p. 201).

"Phase one. You will engage the Covenant and sufficiently disable, but not destroy, one of their ships" (Chapter 26, p. 203).

"This is the real MJOLNIR. What you have been using was only a fraction of what the armor should be. This is everything I had always dreamed it could be. Please put the suit on" (Chapter 27, p. 208).

"Please rescan retina, Dr. Halsey, and repeat today's code phrase in a normal voice" (Chapter 28, p. 225).

"The latest reactor technology. The Pillar of Autumn is the first ship to get it. The two smaller fusion reactors come online to supercharge the main reactor. Their overlapping magnetic fields can temporarily boost power by three hundred percent" (Chapter 29, p. 230).

"Then we don't have a lot of options" (Chapter 31, p. 240).

"Reach is our strategic headquarters and our biggest ship-building facility, Master Chief. If the shipyards fall, then Dr. Halsey's prediction of humanity having only months to survive will shrink to weeks" (Chapter 32, p. 242).

"This is bad" (Chapter 33, p. 251).

"They've breached the perimeter. Fall back! Fall back! If anyone can hear this: the Covenant is groundside. Massing near the armory...they're" (Chapter 34, p. 252).

"We're bound in-system to retrieve you. ETA is five minutes. Destroy the Circumference's database and get out ASAP. If you cannot accomplish your mission . . . I'll have to take out the station with the Pillar of Autumn's weapons. We are running out of time" (Chapter 35, p. 264).

"There will be nothing left to stop the Covenant" (Chapter 36, p. 271).

"Mission completed" (Chapter 37, p. 273).

"The ring is ten thousand kilometers in diameter and twenty-two point three kilometers thick. Spectroscopic analysis is inconclusive, but patterns do not match any known Covenant materials, sir" (Epilogue, p. 282).

Topics for Discussion

Who is the true Dr. Halsey? Why has she chosen to create a group of elite soldiers—the Spartans? Do you believe she is guilty of committing an evil act or the good act of trying to save humankind? If Dr. Halsey is innocent, why does she keep the origins of the Spartans a secret?

Who is the true John 117? Why has he chosen to leave his parents and family behind to become a Spartan? Why do you think John emerges as a natural leader of the Spartans? What do you think happens to John?

Discuss the relationship between Dr. Halsey and John. Are they friends, colleagues or do they have a mother and son type relationship? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Dr. Halsey feel about John? How does John feel about Dr. Halsey? How do Dr. Halsey's feelings change as John grows older? What happens to Dr. Halsey?

Who is winning the war? Do you think the humans will continue to fight now? What role do you think John plays in investigating the new ring the crew of the Pillar of Autumn encounters?

Why does the USNC hide the origins of the soldiers they train as Spartans? Do you think USNC soldiers and personnel suspect something is amiss with the Spartans? Why do you think the other soldiers despise the Spartans? Why do you think the USNC covers up John's fight with the elite soldiers that kills one of them?

Discuss the attacks on humans. What impact do the attacks have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them and how does it derail their lives?

Are the Spartans superhuman? Why do you think the augmentation process is so controversial that Dr. Halsey keeps it a secret? What are her motives for doing what she does?