

# **The Headless Cupid Study Guide**

**The Headless Cupid by Zilpha Keatley Snyder**

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# Plot Summary

The Headless Cupid by Zilpha Keatley Snyder is a work of fiction. A mystery takes place in an old house inhabited by a new family, and members of two families have to learn how to get along.

Jeff and Molly Stanley are newlyweds. Jeff's wife had died the year before, leaving him a widow with four children: David, age eleven; Janie, age six; and Blair and Esther "Tesser", four-year-old twins. The couple buys a new house in Steven's Corners, a rural country town. Amanda, Molly's daughter from her first marriage, is due to arrive and make her home with her mother and new family.

The Old Westerly House is the main setting in the story. Built in 1895 by Old Man Westerly, the house became inhabited by a poltergeist, or noisy ghost, shortly after the house was built. The appearance of the poltergeist is attributed to the presence of Westerly's teenage daughters, Mabel and Harriette. The poltergeist was destructive, throwing rocks and causing general mayhem in the house. The worst thing the poltergeist did was to behead the cupid that adorned the newel post at the end of a hand carved bannister. The head disappeared and had not been seen in many years until it reappeared after Amanda and the Stanley kids began to delve into the house's history and the supernatural.

David Stanley is the protagonist in the story. David is an average eleven-year-old boy. David is exceptionally bright and mature for his age. David grew up fast when his mother died just over a year ago. It was clear to David that he needed to help his father with the other children and with duties at home. David is also quite intelligent, which reflects on his father's profession as a college professor. Overall, David is a well-behaved boy who is respectful of his father and stepmother. It is also David's nature to be nurturing and protective of Janie, Tesser, and Blair.

David has the gift of premonition which he inherited from his mother's side of the family. David does not talk about the gift very much but certainly knows when something is going to happen. The other children also have gifts, particularly Blair who is intuitive and can communicate with animals.

Amanda arrives on the scene and is ready to make things as miserable as possible for everyone. Amanda is angry about her parents' divorce, angry about being taken away from the city and her best friend Leah, and angrier that she is expected to live in an old house in the middle of nowhere. Twelve-year-old Amanda, who is determined to study the occult, will do almost anything to upset Molly and get even with everybody whether or not they committed some offense against her.

Amanda attempts to take the younger kids under her wing and to teach them about magic. David is old enough to understand most of Amanda's interest in the occult, and although he is also interested, it is important to protect the younger children.



Things go awry when Jeff must leave on a three week trip, leaving Molly home with the kids. Suddenly the legendary Westerly poltergeist reappears, mirroring the actions recorded in 1896. The poltergeist turns out to be Amanda, who is caught in the act by David and Blair.

One night a supernatural occurrence happens that was not planned by Amanda. Rocks and other debris fall down the stairs along with the long lost cupid's head. Amanda is now convinced that there really is a poltergeist. Amanda confesses.

David learns that it was Blair that dumped the box down the stairs. Blair had been guided by a ghost girl who told him where to find the box and that it was time the cupid's head was returned. Blair answers only a few questions and then claims not to remember what happened, leaving David wondering who or what really lives in the house with him and his family.



# Chapters 1-4

## Chapters 1-4 Summary

Headless Cupid begins with eleven-year-old David Stanley sitting on the steps of the Old Westerly House, the new home David has moved into with his family. The family dynamic is new as well. There is David, six-year-old Janie, and four-year-old twins, Blair and Esther. Also living in the house is Jeff Stanley, the children's father, and his new wife Molly. On this day, David expects the arrival of his new step-sister, twelve-year-old Amanda. David had met Amanda only once before and did not have any real impression of the girl that seemed to scowl a lot and rarely spoke.

In chapter one, David goes upstairs where the other kids were playing. As usual, Blair is asleep and Janie is angry with Esther for kicking over her horse corral. David is in the middle of settling the argument when they hear Molly's car pull up to the house. Molly gets out of the car after a minute and David can tell that she is upset, perhaps even crying. Amanda sits in the car for a long time before getting out. David decides that mother and daughter were most likely having an argument just before they arrived at the house.

Amanda looks up and notices David and Esther staring at her from David's bedroom window. David does not understand how Amanda could see him because he was peeking through wavy glass windows and latticework. Amanda makes it clear that she wants David to come to the car to help unload her belongings.

Esther tags along to help. David and Esther are eager to get a good look at Amanda, who seems to be dressed in some strange garb. The girl's hair is braided and looped wildly and she is wearing a metallic triangle stuck to her forehead. Esther immediately asks Amanda about the outfit. Amanda explains that the outfit is her ceremonial garb. Amanda studies the occult and the outfit is sacred and important to her rituals. The metallic triangle marks the center of Amanda's power. Although David and Esther think Amanda is weird, they help out while trying to be friendly and polite to this new member of the family.

Amanda talks about her interest in the supernatural. Esther asks many questions. When Esther refers to herself as "Tesser", Amanda wonders if that is the child's spirit name. David explains that Esther created the name as she was younger because she could not pronounce "Esther."

Three of the items removed from the car are special to Amanda. She makes it clear that the animals in the cages are important in her study of the occult. There is a snake, a horny toad, and a crow. When asked about the crow, Amanda scowls and explains that the crow is her Familiar.



Chapter two shows that the conversation about the Familiar continues. Amanda explains in a condescending way that a Familiar is an animal spirit that is a person's connection to the other side. Amanda explains that she has just begun to study and has yet to decide which area of the supernatural will be her specialty. Amanda tells David about her best friend, Leah, who knows a lot about the occult but prefers to specialize in straight witchcraft.

Amanda yells at Tesser for sticking her fingers in the crow's cage. Amanda says the crow bites. David asks why the crow would bite Amanda if it is her Familiar. Amanda explains that she just got the crow and that they have not had a chance to make a connection. Amanda talks about her experience in finding the crow at the pet store.

Amanda meets the other children and is disdainful of their presence. Janie, a six-year-old, meets Amanda and begins talking a mile a minute, as is Janie's style. Amanda is not pleased. David tries to get Janie to shut up. Amanda seems less displeased to meet Blair, Esther's twin, because she thinks Blair does not speak. David tells Amanda that Blair talks, just not very much.

In chapter three, Amanda goes to her room and shuts the door for privacy. David and the other kids leave her alone to unpack. At one point David hears chanting coming from Amanda's room and then a cry of pain. The crow has bitten Amanda again.

David checks on the kids and then goes downstairs. Molly, his stepmother, is in the kitchen, cooking dinner. David can tell that Molly is still upset. David offers to help with dinner. Molly is still surprised at how helpful David is but then remembers that during the time after the children's mother died, David was a big help to his father when it came to minding the children and feeding them.

David reflects on his relationship with Molly. David liked Molly at first. Molly was very different from his mother, but she was nice and fun. Things changed when David learned that Molly and his dad were going to get married. It took a while and some heart-to-heart talks with both Molly and his dad before David was able to accept the new arrangements, including the new house in Steven's Corners.

David is curious about Amanda, who seems to be a complete enigma. The girl always seems to be frowning, giving long cold looks to nearly everyone that spoke to her. Blair tells David that Amanda is very angry.

In chapter four, things are no different at breakfast than they had been the night before. Amanda is still as cold as ice and will only speak when someone speaks directly to her. The attitude puts a damper on an otherwise cheerful morning. Jeff asks David to help him carry things out to the car. David knows that his father does not need help but wishes to speak privately. Jeff asks David his opinion of Amanda. David tells his father that he thinks Amanda needs time to adjust to her new situation. Jeff asks David to make sure the garden is weeded.

David knows that the youngest children will be little to no help with the weeding but that they would enjoy it the same. Janie spends all of her time battling invisible warriors in



the thistles. Amanda sits on a bench and sulks. After a while, Amanda gets the kids motivated by playing slave master and slaves. The kids think the game is fun and David is pleased at the amount of work they manage to accomplish.

Amanda talks about living with her father. Amanda's father, Molly's ex-husband, spoils Amanda and buys her whatever she wants. David asks why Amanda does not live with her father. Amanda becomes angry. David talks about his mother and how she was an open minded woman that thought anything could be possible.

## Chapters 1-4 Analysis

The reader meets David Stanley, an eleven-year-old boy who is very mature for his age. David grew up fast when his mother died just over a year ago. It was clear to David that he needed to help his father with the other children and with duties at home. David is also quite intelligent which reflects on his father's profession as a college professor. Overall, David is a well-behaved boy who is respectful of his father and stepmother. It is also David's nature to be nurturing and protective of Janie, Tesser, and Blair.

Amanda is a curiosity. David does not remember much about Amanda and is curious as to what it will be like having an older sister. David is used to being the eldest child, yet he does not seem to be overly worried about the change.

In chapter two, it is clear from the start that Amanda is angry, defiant, and spoiled. Amanda is the product of a broken home and is resentful that she was forced to leave her father's house and move to Steven's Corners to live with a new family she does not want. Amanda is rebellious and angry toward Molly. The anger carries over into her treatment of the Stanley kids. David must remind himself and the other children that this is a new experience for Amanda and it is important to be patient.

In chapter three, David is shown to be a peacemaker. David goes into the kitchen to help Molly, who is still upset over the argument with Amanda. Molly is grateful that David helps out so much leaving her time to paint. Unlike Amanda, David is pleasant and respectful.

David thinks back about his impressions of Molly. David does not seem to think that Molly is trying to take his dead mother's place. David does worry, however, that the younger kids will forget their real mother.

Amanda shuts herself in her new room and makes it clear that she does not want to be bothered. When approached, Amanda is rude.

In chapter four, Jeff often treats David like an adult. While David is mature, Jeff places a lot of responsibility on the boy's shoulders. Jeff talks about Amanda's arrival and is not pleased at the girl's surly attitude. There is a bit of role reversal when David tells his father that Amanda is going through an adjustment period and that she needs patience.

Amanda openly defies Molly every chance she gets. When Amanda begins to open up to David, it seems as if there has been a breakthrough. Amanda returns to her surly self the minute Molly makes an appearance.





# Chapters 5-8

## Chapters 5-8 Summary

In chapter five, "David was beginning to find out that the only thing you could count on with Amanda was surprises" (p. 48). David and Amanda have a lengthy conversation in the garage. Afterward, David begins to feel as if he has made some headway with Amanda, that he is able to get an idea of what might be going on in her head. David is proved wrong when Amanda returns to her former bratty and defiant self. Later, however, Amanda asks David if he would like to go herb hunting with her. Amanda is disappointed to learn that there is no local cemetery. Amanda explains the importance of the herbs and where they are collected. When Amanda finds the herbs, David thinks that they are common plants, but Amanda swears that they are wolfsbane, deathcup, and bloodroot. David doubts his knowledge and goes along with Amanda.

Amanda regales the others with stories of her great powers, including the incident with Mr. Fitzmaurice's broken leg. The kids are fascinated. David and the others become excited when Amanda offers them the opportunity to become neophytes. Blair asks questions and David does his best to explain. Blair has insight into Amanda's behavior, including her mistreatment of Rolor. Blair is not surprised that Rolor does not like Amanda.

Amanda announces that each person must be tested for supernatural abilities, stating, "I'm going to test you for supernatural aptitude. I'm going to find out if any of you have any natural psychic talents" (p. 55).

In chapter six, each person is tested. Janie argues about her aptitude. Regardless of the results, Amanda downplays each person's talent, only saying, grudgingly, that they were not hopeless. At this point, Amanda decides that there must be rites of initiation to ensure that the neophytes were worthy and serious about magic. "It seemed that there were going to be nine tests. Amanda called them ordeals. Each ordeal would last for a whole day" (p. 62).

The first ordeal is explained in great detail. None of the neophytes are permitted to touch any metal surface for an entire day. David wonders how the kids are going to eat if they cannot use utensils. David resets Molly's alarm clock so everyone is running late. David will offer to feed the kids. David can give the children something they can eat without utensils. The plan backfires when Amanda says she wants pancakes for breakfast. Amanda is not going to make this easy.

In chapter seven, it doesn't seem difficult until David realizes that metal objects also include the kitchen door knob, zippers, and water faucets. David develops a plan to distract Dad and Molly while the children try to eat using alternative methods. David acts ravenous, but actually puts his entire dinner into a baggie so that he can eat it later. Janie wears fuzzy bunny mittens and is very careful not to let the tines of the fork touch



anything but her teeth. Blair eats with his fingers and Tesser uses a plastic toy shovel. The kids manage to pass the ordeal.

In chapter eight, Jeff announces that he will be gone for three weeks. His boss, Dr. Bradley, had planned a three weeks trip with students, but has become ill. Jeff will have to take his place. No one is pleased that Jeff will be gone for so long, but the old house needs expensive repairs and the extra money will be welcome.

Amanda's next ordeal is to collect reptiles. The children are excited about the task. Each finds a suitable reptile or acceptable substitute. David learns that Molly is scared of reptiles and is terrified of snakes. It makes sense that Amanda wanted their expedition to be kept a secret.

## Chapters 5-8 Analysis

In chapter five, Amanda seems to try to be unpredictable as it suits her mystical nature. Amanda is hot and cold when it comes to the treatment to the other kids. She was cold in the beginning but showed a few sparks of humor and willingness to talk. Unfortunately, those sparks faded quickly and Amanda was back to being her cold, surly and superior self.

David is impressed with Amanda, despite her rudeness. Every time Amanda tells David about her exploits or the ways of magic, David believes everything Amanda says because he is inexperienced. However, there are times when David's gut tells him that Amanda is not as well informed as she likes to think. Amanda is determined to make the ordeals as difficult as possible, which angers David.

In chapter six, no matter what the Stanley kids do, Amanda puts them down and treats them as inferior creatures. It is clear that some, if not all, of the Stanley children have powers most likely greater than Amanda's perceived talents. Amanda also introduces the ordeals which she clearly makes up as she goes along. As with the other tasks, Amanda is certain the other kids will fail.

In chapter seven, David takes the ordeals very seriously and comes up with a plan. David is not sure how they will go through an entire day without touching metal but is determined to try. At this point, David is eager to save face with Amanda, although it is becoming less clear to him why it is important.

In chapter eight, Amanda seems to be the only one not upset that Jeff is going away for three weeks. The ordeal involving the reptiles backfires on Amanda. Amanda expected the kids to be frightened of the reptiles, but instead the kids were excited. Amanda is dismayed to learn that the Stanleys have a fondness for reptiles and were forced to give up Jeff's collection because of a squeamish housekeeper. Amanda is still hopeful that Molly will come across one of the slimy creatures.



# Chapters 9-12

## Chapters 9-12 Summary

In chapter nine, the tricky part about having the reptiles is that the children had to keep the pet on them at all times. This proves to be tricky for David and Blair, who end up squirming as their pets crawl around inside their shirts. The next ordeal involves not stepping on any wooden floors. This poses a challenge in the living room where one must crawl on the furniture - including the piano - to get to the other side. David is still tempted to tell his father what is going on but decides against it.

As neophytes, the kids are expected to create their own ceremonial garb. There are several requirements, including collecting an item from a dead person, one from a living person, and the theft of something. However, none of the items can be white. David manages to figure out a plan to qualify them for initiation without breaking too many house rules.

In chapter ten, Amanda chooses the initiation day. It is the same day Molly will be going into the city, so the children will be left to their own devices for most of the day. David is ready for the initiation to take place. "He didn't know exactly what he was expecting, but he felt strangely excited" (p. 103).

Amanda spends a lot of time preparing for the ritual, during which time the other kids are banned from her bedroom. It takes the kids a while to get into their ceremonial garb. When everyone joins Amanda in her room, Amanda scoffs at their attire. Although they had followed Amanda's instructions, the overall effect was not magical in any way. Each child wore an odd assortment of clothing that made him or her look just...odd.

In chapter eleven, the initiation takes place. Amanda puts on an elaborate show with incense, a cauldron, and strange music. Each child must choose a spirit name. Tesser insists on keeping hers because she is Tesser and she wants to be no one else.

Each neophyte is asked to participate in adding things to the cauldron. Next, Amanda shows everyone a strong metal box that will house their personal sacrifices. Each neophyte must sacrifice something that is very important to him or her. Amanda claims that the spirits will circulate the box and each neophyte will add a sacrifice. After the rite, David learns that Janie's sacrifice was their mother's opal ring. David is upset and insists that Janie get the ring back. Amanda begins to make excuses. Blair knows what Amanda was doing and retrieves the ring from the box behind the curtain. Amanda becomes very angry with Blair.

Chapter twelve shows how the next morning, Amanda knocks on the door to David and Blair's bedroom. Amanda is unusually friendly. As David dresses Blair, Amanda announces that it is time to plan for the séance. Amanda explains the process and purpose of a séance.



Strange things begin to happen in the house. These are not supernatural things, but rather issues with the electricity. Sparks fly out of walls and appliances. Molly is worried about a fire. After making a couple of phone calls, Molly locates Mr. Golanski, a retired handyman who lives close to their house. Molly calls Mr. Golanski and the man arrives in a short amount of time.

Molly makes the kids stay outside and out of the way of Mr. Golanski. David asks if he can help. Golanski is an interesting and somewhat mysterious old man. David is excited when he learns that Golanski's father was the craftsman responsible for carving the beautiful old wooden banister. Golanski says he will come back someday soon and repair the damage. Golanski also tells David the story of the Westerly sisters and the headless cupid. Amanda also hears the story and badgers Golanski with questions. After a short while, Golanski tires of Amanda's questions and sends her away.

Later, David and Amanda talk about the Westerly sisters and the headless cupid. Amanda explains poltergeists and says she wants to know more about the house and the cupid's head.

## Chapters 9-12 Analysis

In chapter nine, Amanda continues to create strange ordeals and to make it as difficult as possible for the goals to be achieved. The Stanley kids are determined, however. The author tries to make the reader believe that the smallest children, Tesser and Blair, understand and accept the challenge. It is more likely that they are just playing and have no real concept of Amanda's plan.

Chapter ten shows how Amanda decides to have the initiation on the day Molly will be out of town. Molly trusts David much more than she trusts Amanda. This is just one more thing that makes Amanda angry and petulant. Then Amanda wants to know why she is being treated like a child. Molly manages to smooth over the situation.

In chapter eleven, no matter what the kids do, Amanda must scoff at them and their attempts. This upsets different children at different times. David only truly loses his temper with Amanda when she yells at Blair. Amanda accuses Blair of peeking but is more upset that she has been caught in the act. Everyone believes Blair and doubts the authenticity of Amanda's ritual.

Chapter twelve introduces Mr. Golanski. David has a strange feeling about Golanski the minute the old man arrives on the property. Golanski has an air of mystery about him. He seems like the type of person that can read one's mind and know all of one's secrets just by taking a single glance. David feels that Golanski is supposed to be in the house. It makes sense to David when Golanski starts talking about the banister and the poltergeist. Golanski is not pleased when Amanda breaks in on the conversation. Golanski seems to like talking with David but eventually shoos Amanda away. This is the first time Amanda seems truly interested in something since she arrived at the house.



# Chapters 13-16

## Chapters 13-16 Summary

Chapter thirteen shows Amanda going to the library at the first possible moment the next day to find out more about the Westerly House and the poltergeist. David is antsy all day, waiting for Amanda to come home. Although David tries to concentrate on other things, his mind keeps returning to the information he received from Mr. Golanski. David gets tired of waiting, and although it is very hot outside, he walks across town to the bus stop to meet Amanda. Amanda is animated and tells David about her discovery.

Amanda looked through the local newspapers starting in 1896. The Westerly House was built in 1895, and almost immediately after, strange things began to happen. The strange incidents began with pebbles and rocks appearing all through the house. Some fell down the stairs, some were thrown, causing damage. It was believed that a poltergeist, or noisy ghost, came into the house. Because the poltergeist had to draw power from someone, it chose the Westerly's fourteen-year-old daughter, Harriette. Everyone thought Harriette was directly responsible for the problems in the house until one night strange things occurred while Harriette was sleeping and being watched by three people. That was the night that the cupid's head was cut off, never to be seen again.

Mrs. Westerly contacted a famous medium, who declared that there was an evil entity in the house. Mr. Westerly sent the girls, Mabel and Harriette, off to boarding school. From that day forward, the poltergeist had not appeared.

Amanda tells David she suspects the poltergeist has returned because she, too, is fourteen years old. After their long conversation on the way back to the house, Amanda retreats to her room to think. "As soon as they got back to Westerly House Amanda shut herself in her room and stayed there that night and most of the next day except at mealtime" (p. 136).

In chapter fourteen, the children wait until Molly goes to bed before they begin the séance. The younger children have gone to sleep, but David promises to wake them when it is time to go to Amanda's room. As usual, Amanda is dressed in her ceremonial garb. And, as usual, Blair keeps falling asleep.

After a rough start, the séance is underway. Amanda gives directions on how to participate in a proper séance, including concentrating by staring at a candle. It is difficult to get the younger children, particularly Janie, to settle down and focus. Blair keeps falling over, asleep. Finally the séance gets underway. Amanda puts herself into a trance. Before long there are rapping noises that correspond to Amanda's questions. The children also see a ghostly apparition coming from Amanda's closet. Later, Amanda asks what happened. Amanda claims not to remember anything—that it must have been her spirit contact that had been talking during the séance.



In chapter fifteen, after the little kids are in bed, David goes to Amanda's room to discuss the séance. David is suspicious regarding the activity that took place. David thinks about what his father might say, about approaching things scientifically. David begins to doubt Amanda's abilities and thinks she may have orchestrated the whole thing. After all, Amanda was a tricky girl. However, David's feelings tell him that something supernatural had happened.

The next day the kids discuss the séance and David explains what happened after they went to bed. When asked about the séance, Blair says he did not pay attention to the rapping, that the spirit was talking to him instead. The others, curious, want to know what the spirit said to Blair. Blair starts to say that the spirit was talking about Amanda but Amanda interrupts, screaming at Blair. Blair gives Amanda a peace offering and then clams up about the experience.

That afternoon, the rocks start to appear. Esther is the first to notice them when she steps on a pebble. Molly asks where the rocks came from and how they got into the house. No one knows. Amanda tries to blame the kids. Amanda asks David if he thinks the poltergeist is responsible. David says he does not know. The biggest incident happens while everyone is seated at the table. A rock smashes a pitcher of milk. This scares Molly, who is already upset. David tries to figure out how it happened.

In chapter sixteen, everyone wakes up in the middle of the night due to a loud crash coming from the stairs. Molly quickly checks on all of the children to make sure no one has been hurt. After gathering together the whole family goes to investigate, Molly is upset to learn that her philodendron has been smashed and seems to be searching for a plausible explanation. Tesser is upset by the accident and immediately begins to pick up the pieces of broken pottery and place them on the steps. Molly tells Tesser that she will clean it up in the morning. Janie and Tesser go into Molly's room to sleep with her. Amanda, Blair and David go back to bed.

David is sure he would be awake all night but is surprised when something wakes him. It is dark. David gets the feeling that something has touched him. David listens for a while. Blair shakes David's shoulder and tells him to listen. There is a creak, a soft click and a loud thud. David looks out into the hall and sees a white filmy figure fleeing down the hallway. The group goes to investigate and Blair points out a small pen flashlight that had fallen onto the stairs. The flashlight is still warm from a person's hand. The flashlight belongs to Amanda.

The family goes downstairs to investigate. A large painting of Janie and the twins has fallen off the wall. David notices that the painting did not fall by itself. The top of the gilt frame had been smashed. On the floor is a rock crystal Jeff keeps on his desk. David knows the crystal is very heavy and had to be thrown hard to cause so much damage.



## Chapters 13-16 Analysis

In chapter thirteen, the news about the Westerly sisters gives Amanda ideas on how to promote her activity in the occult world. Harriette Westerly was the same age as Amanda is now, so it would make perfect sense for the poltergeist to make an encore performance.

David likes the new Amanda's behavior. Unfortunately, it does not last long and Amanda shuts herself away. When David wants to speak to Amanda he is dismissed.

In chapter fourteen, Amanda's patience is tested as is her plan when the children won't settle down. The girls, Janie and Tesser, are terminally curious and do not want to do anything that is not explained to them first. This makes Amanda angry and frustrates David. Amanda connects with a spirit and asks it questions. The children are fascinated and scared but do not know what to do about it. The apparition in the closet seems suspicious to Blair, who is under the table. David collects Blair and goes with the little ones out into the hall. David is intrigued when Amanda has no recollection of the séance.

In chapter fifteen, David becomes more and more suspicious of Amanda and her activities. The reader gets a hint that Amanda is behind all the supernatural activity when she claims to have stubbed her toe the morning after the séance. Blair knows what is going on but is meek enough to be frightened by Amanda. Amanda screams at Blair to keep him from revealing her secrets.

David is almost completely convinced Amanda is behind the appearance of the rocks. It seems too coincidental that the rocks would appear right after Amanda learned about the previous incidents. The only thing that makes David doubt himself is the incident with the milk pitcher. David cannot figure out how Amanda could have thrown the rock when she was sitting at the table with everyone else.

In chapter sixteen, Molly is frantic; checking on the children to make sure everyone is safe. The goings-on in the house have Molly on edge and this incident may break what little reserve Molly has left. David checks to see what Amanda was doing when the crash occurred. Amanda emerges from her room, sleepy-eyed and dressed in a night shirt.

Molly is upset to see the smashed flower pot and struggles to understand what is going on in the house. The thought of having a poltergeist is too much for Molly to handle. She is torn between being scared and protecting the children. Molly takes care of the children and tries to soothe them while trying not to cry. The ruined painting is a sign of Amanda's anger and bitterness. It is obvious to David that Amanda was the one to drop the flashlight and to ruin the painting. David knows for sure that Blair has been right all along and that Amanda is the culprit. Before David goes to Molly, he wants to think things through.



# Chapters 17-20

## Chapters 17-20 Summary

In chapter seventeen, after the mess had been cleaned up and everyone went back to bed, David lies awake, trying to sift through the questions running through his head. David tries to figure things out logically, which does not seem to be working well. "When David finally got back into bed that night, he fully intended to stay awake until he had everything thought out. There was a lot to think about - like why? and how? and what now?" (p. 170).

David spends a lot of time thinking about what happened the night before. What would Molly do if she found out that Amanda is behind all of the poltergeist activity? How would Molly feel when she learned that it was Amanda that had ruined her painting of Janie and the twins? What would his father do? If the Westerly girls had been sent away to boarding school as a punishment for their involvement with the haunting incidents in the house - something that had never been proven - what would happen to Amanda? Would Amanda be sent away? Would being sent away make Amanda hate adults even more than she does already?

David ponders all of these things and then realizes that Blair must be a part of the decision. After all, Blair was at David's side when Amanda ran down the hall. David asks Blair what he saw the night before. Blair tells David that he saw Amanda in the hall. David asks Blair if he is going to tell on Amanda. Blair says no. David thinks about how to handle the situation. If they don't tell Molly, then something has to be done to make the activity stop. David thinks about blackmailing Amanda but then decides it is not a good idea. Blair climbs under the covers and says he is thinking of a way to make Amanda stop.

David no longer has time to think because Molly calls everyone down to breakfast. When Amanda arrives, late as usual, she surveys the room to gauge how upset everyone is regarding the incident from the night before. When David sees Amanda, he feels differently about her. For the first time, David is able to mirror Amanda's cold hard stare. David realizes that it is anger behind the stare.

Molly announces that she has invited a friend to stay for a few days. Amanda grumbles when she learns that the friend is Ingrid, one of Molly's former co-workers. Amanda dislikes Ingrid because she's bossy and like every other adult which, in Amanda's world, means that the woman is utterly useless and someone to be avoided.

Amanda is surprised when David says he and the other kids are staying home while Molly goes into town to pick up Ingrid. Molly is worried. David tells Molly that everything will be fine and that he has a feeling there will be no supernatural activity while she is gone. After all, David thinks, Amanda would not go to all of the trouble just to scare the kids.





David spends part of the afternoon reading to Janie, Tesser and Blair. The younger children love to hear David read because he puts a great deal of expression into the story. Amanda joins the group and after a while takes over the story telling. David is surprised that Amanda is interested in spending time with them.

Molly calls to say that she is having car trouble and will be late. Molly gives David instructions on what to do to start dinner. Dinner goes well. The food is not the best they have ever had, but it is edible and the kids have a great time talking and laughing with Amanda. Molly calls again to say that they will be later still. David tells her that everything is fine. The kids are getting ready for bed and there have been no incidents while Molly was away. Janie and Tesser want to go to bed early. Oddly enough, it is Blair who is not tired. After a few minutes, Blair decides to go to bed and Amanda carries him up the stairs on her back.

David is watching television when he hears a noise and then many loud noises afterward. David runs to the stairs to see what has happened. David's first thought is that Amanda was playing poltergeist again. Then David realizes that it could not have been Amanda because she is in the kitchen getting cookies and she could not have been at the top of the stairs at the same time the scream came from the kitchen.

Amanda runs out into the living room to find out what has happened. All sizes of rocks and pebbles clutter the stairs. There are also odd pieces of machinery and other things that neither can identify. After looking around for a bit trying to figure out what has happened, David picks up what he thinks is another large rock. It is a carved wooden cupid's head.

In chapter eighteen, no one speaks as David and Amanda study the cupid's head. Amanda seems to be so scared that she is about to cry. Amanda and David go back into the living room where it is brighter. Amanda asks David if he did it. Amanda is so upset that she is answering her own questions. David asks Amanda if she did it. Amanda slips and says that it was not her fault this time. Amanda confesses to all of the other tricks. Amanda is in awe that David does not seem to be scared. David thinks that he was not scared at the steps because he was sure that Amanda was behind the whole thing. Amanda wishes Molly and Ingrid would come home.

David and Amanda sit in silence for a while, wondering what might have happened to cause the Westerly ghost to return. Both are excited when they hear Molly's car enter the driveway.

Molly and Ingrid check on the other kids and then sit down to listen to the story of the poltergeist's latest activity. Ingrid is a no-nonsense woman who views everything logically. In Ingrid's mind, the mess on the steps had to be caused by a person. Nothing else makes sense. David can see that no matter what he and Amanda say, Ingrid will believe none of it. Molly, on the other hand, believes it all.

David and Ingrid clean up the mess on the stairs. David says he wants to keep the cupid's head in his room. For the first time, David does not have the creepy crawly



feeling on his neck. David hears Molly and Amanda talking and thinks that it is probably the most they have talked in a year or two. David goes to bed without seeing the poltergeist.

In chapter nineteen, Ingrid's interrogation continues in the morning while David and Amanda are having breakfast. Molly does not want to tell Janie, Blair and Tesser what happened. Ingrid is not pleased. Ingrid agrees not to tell Blair and Tesser but insists on speaking to Janie. David watches Amanda as Ingrid picks apart the events of the last evening. Amanda is putting up her guard once again.

Amanda and David sit outside in silence. After a while they begin to talk about what has happened. David is stunned when Amanda says she wishes Jeff was home. Just as David is about to reply, Janie and Tesser come outside. David is surprised again when Amanda plays with the girls in the yard.

David goes upstairs and talks with Blair. David notices a bruise on Blair's leg. David asks Blair what happened. Blair shows David more marks on his legs and ankles. Blair tells David he got the marks when he fell down the stairs the night before. Blair tells David he was carrying the box and he fell, dropping the box. Blair asks David if he has seen the box.

In chapter twenty, David asks Blair many questions to try and understand what the little boy is talking about regarding the box. The more questions David asks the quieter Blair gets, which causes David to become even more impatient. Blair wanders over to the window seat where he keeps his toys. Blair shows David a hole where a board had come loose. The hole was where Blair had found the box. Blair tells David that he hurt his leg when he fell down the stairs. Amanda's screams scared Blair and he ran back into the bedroom where he waited for David. Blair fell asleep and did not wake until morning.

David shows the cupid's head to Blair. There are still many questions to be answered. Was there ever a Westerly poltergeist?

After a while, David and Blair decide not to tell anyone that Blair was the one that found the box. If Amanda knew there wasn't a real poltergeist then things might start to happen again. The boys decided to keep it a secret for now.

Jeff returns from the three week trip and is very happy to see everyone. Amanda's attitude continues to be much better and she even starts to like Jeff.

David decides it is time to put the cupid's head back onto its body. As David is preparing to glue the head back onto the body, Blair comes and sits on the steps. Blair says the little girl will be happy. David is confused. Blair says there is a little girl in the house. It was the girl that told Blair where to find the head and that it was time to put it back.



## Chapters 17-20 Analysis

In chapter seventeen, a great deal of action takes place. Amanda further ingratiates herself to the other kids. The tables are turning, in that Amanda is more subdued after Molly leaves and proves that she can be fun. David is still very skeptical of Amanda's behavior but decides to play along.

David immediately suspects Amanda when everything comes tumbling down the stairs. David does not know what to do first. David wants to see what has happened but he also wants to know if Amanda is behind it. When Amanda comes out of the kitchen, David thinks that Amanda looks frightened but then again, he has seen her acting ability before. David begins to doubt Amanda's involvement when she acts as confused as he is regarding the items on the steps. Neither says anything when David finds the cupid's head.

In chapter eighteen, it becomes clear to David that Amanda is not responsible for this supernatural activity. Amanda confesses and seems to feel better for it. David manages to hide the fact that he is scared now. David was not scared at the steps because he was still certain Amanda was responsible.

There is a major shift in the relationship between Molly and Amanda. When Amanda becomes deeply scared, she wants nothing more than her mother. David is a bit frustrated by Ingrid's unwillingness to believe anything he and Amanda say. In some ways, however, David knows that Ingrid is right, at least about the previous occurrences. David feels at ease for the first time in a long time. The cupid's head needs to be protected and returned to its body. David feels the responsibility to do it.

In chapter nineteen, everything begins to make sense to David when he hears Blair's story. David assumes that Blair had been taking toys out of the window seat and found the head. David feels bad that Blair was scared by Amanda's screams but it works out for the best when the boys decide to keep it a secret.

The experience seems to have affected Amanda the most. David and the others appreciate the positive changes.

The story ends in chapter twenty, with Blair telling David about the little ghost girl. David is shocked to learn that Blair had been guided by some unseen force. When pushed to answer questions, Blair says he does not remember. All of a sudden, David is back to wondering what really happened in the Westerly House.



# Characters

## David Stanley

David Stanley is the protagonist in the story. David is an average eleven-year-old boy. David is exceptionally bright and mature for his age. David grew up fast when his mother died just over a year ago. It was clear to David at that point that he needed to help his father with the other children and with duties at home. David is also quite intelligent, which reflects on his father's profession as a college professor. Overall, David is a well-behaved boy who is respectful of his father and stepmother. It is also David's nature to be nurturing and protective of Janie, Tesser, and Blair.

David has the gift of premonition, which he inherited from his mother's side of the family. David does not talk about the gift very much but certainly knows when something is going to happen. The other children also have gifts, particularly Blair, who is intuitive and can communicate with animals.

David is curious, but only to the point that he can explore without defying his parents. When Amanda asks David and the other children to steal, David finds a way to come up with a plan that will fulfill Amanda's requirements without encouraging Janie, Tesser and Blair to break the house rules, as well as the law.

Throughout the story, David shows strength of character and of believing in himself. David defends his siblings and is the first to stand up for them, especially when they are right about something. David realizes in the end that he needs to trust his own gifts and not rely on others for validation.

## Amanda

Amanda is the twelve-year-old daughter of Molly. When Molly and her husband divorced, Amanda went to live with her mother. While Molly and Jeff were getting the new house in order, Amanda lived with her father. Now that Amanda is being forced to leave the city and move to the country, the girl has developed an attitude that will not be easily changed.

Amanda's first appearance at the Old Westerly House is no less than a full blown performance. Amanda's outfit is contrived to convey her interest in the occult and more likely than not to disturb her mother. Startling people and creating a spectacle of herself is simply a bonus in Amanda's mind.

Amanda's love of the occult is the main focus of her life at this point. In addition to the unusual interest, Amanda insists on pairing it with an objectionable friend, Leah, of whom Molly disapproves. Amanda explains to the children that she has no use for adults.



It is clear from the start that Amanda is angry, defiant, and spoiled. Amanda is the product of a broken home and is resentful that she was forced to leave her father's house and move to Steven's Corners to live with a new family she does not want. Amanda is rebellious and angry toward Molly. The anger carries over into her treatment of the Stanley kids.

Amanda openly defies Molly every chance she gets. When Amanda begins to open up to David, it seems as if there has been a breakthrough. Amanda returns to her surly self the minute Molly makes an appearance.

As the book goes on, Amanda begins to come out of her shell more and more. The girl is not nearly as gifted and powerful as she likes to think. In fact, Amanda keeps very busy making herself appear powerful to impress the other kids. When it comes out that there really may be a poltergeist in the Old Westerly House, Amanda returns to the scared little girl she has been working so hard to hide.

## **Janie Victoria Stanley**

Janie is a six-year-old girl who loves to be overly formal and dramatic. Like David, Janie is extremely bright. At this time in Janie's life, she is obsessed with gruesome things like monsters, battles and slain creatures. The occult appeals to Janie in every way. The only negative thing anyone has to say about Janie is that she talks all the time and will not shut up.

## **Esther**

Esther, aka Tesser, is the four-year-old daughter of Jeff and his deceased wife. Tesser is a twin. Tesser is bright, comedic, and has an insatiable curiosity.

## **Blair Stanley**

Blair Stanley is the four-year-old son of Jeff and his deceased wife. Blair is a twin. Blair is bright, intuitive, and has an insatiable curiosity. Blair is one of the most gifted people in the family. Like David, Blair has premonitions. Blair can also communicate with animals.

## **Professor Jeffrey A. Stanley**

Professor Jeffrey A. Stanley is the Assistant Professor of Geology at Amesworth College. Jeff is the father to David, Janie, Blair and Esther. Jeff is married to Molly and is the stepfather to Amanda. Jeff is a big man with a stern look and definite opinions. Everyone sees Jeff as being fair and understanding, although he does have a bit of a temper. Jeff is great with kids and often takes his own kids on different kinds of exploration trips. Jeff is also fond of reptiles.



## **Molly Stanley**

Molly Stanley is the wife of Jeff Stanley, mother to Amanda, and stepmother to David, Janie, Blair and Esther. Molly is an even tempered woman that is often tried by Amanda's behavior. Molly is an artist and a bit of a scaredy cat.

## **Mabel and Harriette Westerly**

Mabel and Harriette Westerly are the sisters that lived in the Old Westerly house as teenagers. Mabel was twelve and Harriette was fourteen when the poltergeist supposedly took over the house and beheaded the cupid on the newel post.

## **Mr. Golanski**

Mr. Golanski is the old handy man hired by Molly to work on the electrical issues in the house. Mr. Golanski's father was the craftsman that hand carved the banister, including the cupids. Golanski shares the story of the headless cupid with David and Amanda.

## **Leah**

Leah is Amanda's best friend. Leah is the same age as Amanda and is the one that initiated Amanda into the world of the occult. According to Amanda, Leah is very knowledgeable about the occult but prefers to practice straight witchcraft.

## **Ingrid**

Ingrid is a friend and former co-worker of Molly's who comes to stay at the Old Westerly House after strange things start to happen.



# Objects/Places

## The Old Westerly House

The Old Westerly House is the main setting in the story. Built in 1895 by Old Man Westerly, the house became inhabited by a poltergeist, or noisy ghost, shortly after the house was built. The appearance of the poltergeist is attributed to the presence of Westerly's teenage daughters, Mabel and Harriette. The poltergeist was destructive, throwing rocks and causing general mayhem in the house. The worst thing the poltergeist did was to behead the cupid that adorned the newel post at the end of a hand carved bannister. The head disappeared and had not been seen in many years until it reappeared after Amanda and the Stanley kids began to delve into the house's history and the supernatural.

The house itself is located in Steven's Corners, a small country town. The children love the big house and its history. The house is a two story building with hand blown glass and lattice work. There are several porches leading out onto a large lawn where the kids often play. The house and gardens need to be brought back to their former glory. Molly intends to remodel the inside of the house which has not been touched in at least fifty years.

## The Headless Cupid

The Headless Cupid is the main topic in the book. The cupid was hand carved out of wood and was part of the newel post on the ornate bannister in the Old Westerly House. Legend has it that a poltergeist beheaded the cupid and its head has disappeared.

## Attic

The attic is one of the locations where the children go to look for old artifacts.

## Amanda's Room

Amanda's room is the place where the Stanley kids are initiated into the world of the supernatural. It is also a sanctuary for Amanda and where she practices her magic and keeps her pets.

## Rolor

Rolor is a black crow that also serves as Amanda's Familiar. Unfortunately, Rolor hates Amanda and bites her frequently.



## **Reptiles**

Reptiles are required items for collection if the Stanley children are going to be initiated. Jeff once had a collection of reptiles until the housekeeper made him get rid of them.

## **Public Library**

The Public Library is there Amanda goes to learn more about the Old Westerly House.

## **Steven's Corners**

Steven's Corners is the name of the country town where the Stanleys live.

## **Amesworth College**

Amesworth College is the school where Jeff Stanley works as the Assistant Professor of Geology.





# Themes

## The Supernatural

The supernatural is one of the main themes in the story. The Old Westerly House is the perfect setting for supernatural activity. The house is old and supposedly haunted. No one knows for sure what happened in the house other than there was once a poltergeist that decapitated the cupid at the base of the stairs. A poltergeist is a noisy ghost that is known for moving things around. While some can be violent, most are simply destructive.

Although Amanda is new to the world of the supernatural, she delights in studying the various areas of paranormal activity and spends as much time as she can learning about different aspects. As neophytes, the Stanley children do not fully understand the supernatural or the occult, but they have more natural abilities than Amanda suspects. The areas discussed in the book include witchcraft, including spell casting and mind control; séances and mediumship - communicating with spirits on the other side; familiars - spirits in the form of animals that are a conduit to the other side; premonitions - the ability to see and/or know things before they happen; intuition - similar to premonitions; and animal communications - a special gift possessed by Blair who can speak with animals and understand their wants and needs.

As a novice, Amanda often confuses the supernatural with the trappings that go along with it such as initiation rites and ceremonial garb.

## New Experiences

New experiences are another main theme in the story. David Stanley's mother had died only a year before, so David and his siblings are getting used to not having their mother around any more. Additionally, their father remarried, so there is a new person in the house. Although the kids like Molly, it took them, particularly David, a while to get used to their father being married to a new woman.

Expanding the family also meant moving to a new house in a new community. The house in the country is nice and large, a perfect place for the family. Another new experience is moving into a house that may be haunted. This is especially interesting for a group of curious kids that believe in secret passages and the possibility of the existence of ghosts.

The arrival of Amanda is when everything changes. Amanda is currently looking for new experiences via the occult and is determined to take everyone with her, willing or not. Having a stepsister in the house changes the entire dynamic. Amanda is not just any stepsister. She is surly, rude, mean, and angry. David works hard to adapt as do the other children. The last new experience is the return of the cupid's head and the poltergeist.



## Research

Research is important in unraveling the mystery of the Old Westerly House. It is also important when it comes to learning about the supernatural. The Stanleys know nothing about the Old Westerly House before they buy it. Jeff and Molly rely on the real estate agent for all the necessary information. The real estate agent is local and knows about the history of the house but feels that it is not necessary to share it with the family since there had been no recorded activity since the Westerly sisters moved out and went to boarding school.

Amanda has been doing a lot of research into the supernatural, which displeases Molly. It is unclear if Molly does not like Amanda's activities or is more upset over Amanda's choice of best friend and research partner, Leah. Amanda spends every free minute learning all she can about the occult so that she may be able to practice and eventually choose her specialty.

When David sees Amanda's boxes of books on the supernatural and other interesting subjects, David is also interested in conducting a bit of research.

When the kids learn about the Westerly girls, Amanda goes immediately to the local public library to conduct research on the house, its former inhabitants and ghostly occurrences. Amanda finds what she needs from studying old newspapers.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view used in *The Headless Cupid* by Zilpha Keatley Snyder is third person omniscient. This is particularly appropriate when setting and intangible objects are of great importance to the story. Third person allows Snyder to give the reader great insight into the sights and sounds encountered in the Westerly House and to develop a sense of personality and vision regarding each character.

In some places, no other point of view would be appropriate, particularly when the story revolves around the tension between Molly and Amanda. The reader needs to see both sides of the story to better understand the relationship. Molly is trying to be an understanding parent while not being a pushover; Amanda is being extremely difficult to upset her mother and to test her boundaries.

There are times when Snyder mixes in references to David that border on the first person point of view. For example, there are instances when the text will read "Dad" rather than "the dad." This seems to occur most when the author is focused on David's thoughts.

Additionally, it allows the reader to get insight into things that may not have been seen and heard by David Stanley, to learn about the story through a more mature set of eyes than the younger children and to experience the individual journeys of the characters like Amanda, Janie, Tesser, Blair and the others.

## Setting

The Old Westerly House is the main setting in the story. Built in 1895 by Old Man Westerly, the house became inhabited by a poltergeist, or noisy ghost, shortly after the house was built. The appearance of the poltergeist is attributed to the presence of Westerly's teenage daughters, Mabel and Harriette. The poltergeist was destructive, throwing rocks and causing general mayhem in the house. The worst thing the poltergeist did was to behead the cupid that adorned the newel post at the end of a hand carved banister. The head disappeared and had not been seen in many years until it reappeared after Amanda and the Stanley kids began to delve into the house's history and the supernatural.

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## Language and Meaning

The language and meaning used throughout *The Headless Cupid* by Zilpha Keatley Snyder reflects on the times in a minimal way.

In general, the language used in the story is casual. There is some use of slang in the dialogue, but very little. Most of the references to the time period are seen in the most basic way such as the existence of country schools.

The children seem to speak in a mature way, almost to the point of being unbelievable. The author gets away with the advanced language by giving Jeffrey A. Stanley the job of Assistant Professor of Geology at Amesworth College. It is clear that all of the children and Molly are also intelligent. The most obvious misstep comes from the dialogue from the twins, Blair and Esther. Although four year olds can be bright and are of complex ideas, it seems that Blair and Esther are far above and beyond their years. This is juxtaposed with behaviors of small children, such as Esther's insistence at calling herself Tesser, the bickering with Janie, and Blair's constant need for sleep.

There is some language related to the occult such as Familiar, rites, initiation, rituals and poltergeists. The terms are explained and used often enough to become a regular part of the dialogue.

## Structure

*The Headless Cupid* by Zilpha Keatley Snyder is a work of fiction. It is comprised of 203 pages and twenty chapters. There are also eleven illustrations spread throughout the book. The first appears before chapter one. There are also illustrations included in chapters two, three, five, seven, nine, eleven, thirteen, fourteen, sixteen and eighteen. The illustrations are of the characters and some miscellaneous items such as a copy of the 1896 newspaper and a picture of Rolor.

The longest chapter in the book is comprised of fourteen pages. The shortest chapter in the book is comprised of six pages. The average length of the chapters is ten pages.

The book is written in chronological order from the moments just before Amanda arrives at the Westerly House. There is some use of flashback to fill in the back story of the Stanley family. Most of Amanda's history is brought out through dialogue. The story ends with a bit of a cliffhanger, leaving Blair's mysterious abilities intact and David wondering what other mysteries might still exist in the old house.

The illustrations also manage to capture important details in the story. David describes Amanda's appearance including her ceremonial garb and icy facial expression. The

illustration captures that look and gives the reader an extra look into the eyes of the strange little girl.



## Quotes

"That feeling about Amanda came partly from a few specific clues, but mostly from a premonition."

Chap. 1, p. 4

"David was fascinated. Watching Amanda's face as she talked about the crow was like watching one of those stone faces carved on mountains come alive, amazingly, dramatically alive."

Chap. 2, p. 18

"Usually David enjoyed reading, and he was part way through a very good book, but that afternoon he had a hard time keeping his mind on the story."

Chap. 3, p. 28

"Inwardly, David shrugged his shoulders. Let her do what she wanted, it wasn't any of his business."

Chap. 4, p. 41

"David was beginning to find out that the only thing you could count on with Amanda was surprises."

Chap. 5, p. 48

"I'm going to test you for supernatural aptitude. I'm going to find out if any of you have any natural psychic talents."

Chap. 5, p. 55

"It seemed that there were going to be nine tests. Amanda called them ordeals. Each ordeal would last for a whole day."

Chap. 6, p. 62

"That night during his usual time for thinking things over - when he was lying in bed waiting to go to sleep - David thought some more about intentions."

Chap. 7, p. 78

"Dad was worried about a lot of things. He'd noticed a lot of strange behavior he said, like bad table manners, and things getting broken, and basic rules of civilized behavior being ignored, such as not climbing on the furniture."

Chap. 9, p. 96



"He didn't know exactly what he was expecting, but he felt strangely excited. "  
Chap. 10, p. 103

"As soon as they got back to Westerly House Amanda shut herself in her room and stayed there that night and most of the next day except at mealtime."  
Chap. 13, p. 136

"I don't see what she's so scared about. Poltergeists don't ever really hurt anyone."  
Chap. 16, pp. 164-165

"When David finally got back into bed that night, he fully intended to stay awake until he had everything thought out. There was a lot to think about - like why? and how? and what now?"  
Chap. 17, p. 170



## Topics for Discussion

What is your opinion on David's level of maturity? Do you think it is accurate? Is it common for an eleven-year-old to be so mature and to help out without complaining? What made David fall into the position of being a helper? How do the other children feel about being "bossed" by David? Do the other kids respect David? Describe David's relationship with each sibling. Is David closer to one than the other? Explain. Also discuss how David's role changed once Molly came into the picture.

Amanda is an angry young girl who clearly has issues with her mother. Why is Amanda so angry? Why does Amanda blame Molly for her troubles? Is Molly to blame? Is Amanda angry with her father? What is Amanda's attitude toward Jeff, David, Janie, Esther and Blair? What are the only things that seem to make Amanda happy? Do you think Amanda is being rebellious because she is truly interested in the supernatural or do you think it's another way to upset Molly? Is Amanda's friendship real or another way to upset Molly? Explain.

Explain the ghostly happenings in the Old Westerly House. When did they start? Do you think the occurrences were real? Who was the cause of the happenings in 1895-1896? What happened during that time? When did the disturbances stop? How was the headless cupid involved? Do you think it was the work of a poltergeist or was it a trick? Where had the cupid's head been all those years? How do the children react when they learn about the story? What might have caused the poltergeist to return? Explain.

As the story goes along, David begins to suspect that Amanda is the one causing the disturbances, not a poltergeist as the girl claims. Why does David suspect Amanda? How could the rock on the kitchen table be explained if Amanda was in plain view the entire time? Who was the first person to identify Amanda as the culprit? Does Molly suspect what is happening in the house? Why is Amanda trying to convince the others that the house is haunted? What does Amanda hope to gain by proving to the others that she is a powerful figure? What happens to Amanda's attitude when things begin to go awry? How does Amanda react when a real poltergeist enters the picture?

Blair is a quiet child who rarely talks, but when he does speak it is about something important. Why is David so defensive when Amanda comments on Blair's silence? What is special about Blair? Blair possesses certain gifts that are not easily understood by others, particularly adults. What can Blair do that most other children cannot? Where did Blair obtain this gift? Why does Blair's gift upset Amanda's plans? Also examine the scene in which Blair picks up Rolor and puts him back in the cage.

Examine Janie's fascination with gory and scary things. David says Janie likes to be scared and that the day she was almost hit by a car was one of the most exciting days of her life. Explain Janie's activities in the garden with the thistles. Why does David leave Janie alone while he and the others are working hard? What is Amanda's opinion of Janie? Does Janie get offended when people tell her to shut up after she repeats a





story a hundred times? How do the other kids feel about Janie? How does Janie display her temper?

Amanda develops some ridiculous initiation rites to introduce the neophytes into the world of the occult. What is a neophyte? Is Amanda properly trained to conduct the initiation rites? If so, how was Amanda trained and by whom? If Amanda is a novice, how does she know that the rites are being performed in the correct way? Explain in detail the rituals Amanda orders the kids to complete. Include the reaction of the other kids and the lengths they go to in order to complete the rituals.