

# **Jasper Jones Study Guide**

## **Jasper Jones by Craig Silvey**

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# Contents

<a href="#">Jasper Jones Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 1.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 2.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 3.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 4.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 5.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 6.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 7.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 8.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 9.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>



# Plot Summary

"Jasper Jones," written by author Craig Silvey is the story of thirteen year old Charles "Charlie" Bucktin and his struggle to process and live with the fact that he helped Jasper Jones, the town trouble maker, cover up the death of Laura Wishart.

The story takes place in Corrigan, Australia during the Vietnam War. It begins when Jasper Jones comes to Charlie's window at night. Even though Jasper has the reputation of being the town's trouble maker, Charlie feels somewhat honored that Jasper is at his window asking him for help. Charlie decides to leave with Jasper but when they arrive to their destination, Jasper's secret glade in the woods, Charlie sees the body of Laura Wishart, Jasper's secret girlfriend, hanging from "Jasper's tree."

Charlie is even more taken back by the fact that Laura is the older sister of his crush, Eliza Wishart. Jasper wants Charlie's help in moving Laura's body because he wants time to find out who did this before he is blamed, as he is blamed for everything else. Charlie reluctantly agrees to help and he and Jasper sink Laura's body to the bottom of the dam.

In chapters 2-6, Charlie struggles to deal with the fact that helped Jasper sink Laura's body. His struggle is made worse when the town begins its search for Laura because Charlie knows where she is but can't say due to the promise he made Jasper. Charlie runs into more troubles because, as the story progresses, he builds a stronger connection with Eliza and finds himself wanting to tell her what happened.

Jasper's presence is scarce throughout these chapters but, when he does see Charlie, he tells Charlie that he's convinced that "Mad Jack Lionel" is guilty of killing Laura. Also in these chapters, the reader learns about Charlie's dysfunctional family dynamics, particularly his negative relationship with his mother. The reader also gets to know Charlie's best friend, Jeffrey Lu, more intimately as well.

Chapter 7 brings the pieces of the puzzle together and provides the climax of the book. Jasper and Charlie confront Jack Lionel only to find out that Jack did not kill Laura but that he is Jasper's grandfather and that he was driving the car when Jasper's mother was killed in a car accident. However Eliza comes to Charlie's window in chapter 7 and takes him to Jasper's Grove, revealing that she was there the night that she saw Laura take her own life.

Through a note left to Jasper from Laura, the reader learns that Laura's father was visiting her in her room at night, that Laura was pregnant by her father and that Laura's mother did not believe her. Eliza shares this with Jasper as well and Charlie tells Eliza that he and Jasper sunk Laura's body. Jasper decides to follow through on his plan to leave Corrigan and he is not present in the book past chapter 7.

Chapters 8 and 9 bring a close to the book. Eliza never reveals the information she knows to the police but she does tell her mother, promising only to reveal the location of



Laura's body if their mother comes forward with the truth, although this never happens. Eliza and Charlie grow closer and the book ends with Charlie telling Eliza how he feels about her as Eliza's house burns, an act that the text suggests had something to do with Eliza.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

Chapter 1 introduces the two characters that seem to be the main characters, Jasper Jones and Charlie. The chapter begins with Jasper coming to Charlie's window in the middle of the night and asking Charlie to leave his house in order to help him. Although somewhat scared, Charlie also seems to feel honored that Jasper has asked for his help. Charlie describes Jasper as a year older, wiry but with definition and scruffy hair. Jasper explains that he needs Charlie's help but he won't tell him why.

They walk for a while through their town, Corrigan, until Jasper stops to smoke a cigarette in front of the house of the town's infamous Mad Jack Lionel. Jasper assures him that this is not their destination and they continue walking. Charlie shares that Jasper has a bad reputation in their town, that his mother is dead and his father is uninvolved, that he is the child that parents warn their children not to be like.

Jasper is immediately blamed by everyone in town anytime something goes wrong. Charlie also shares that, unlike his classmates, he is not good at sports but is smart and good at school. Charlie's father teaches literature and has recently given him complete access to his library of books at home. Charlie has one friend at school, Jeffrey Lu, and a crush, Eliza Wishart.

Finally, Jasper and Charlie arrive at their destination, a large old tree in the middle of the woods. Jasper motions for Charlie to continue walking just a few steps forward but is still refusing to tell Charlie what is on the other side of the tree. Jasper tells Charlie that he knows he can trust him and, when Charlie takes a few steps forward, he sees what Jasper brought him here to see: a girl hanging from dead from the tree.

Charlie quickly finds out that the girl is Laura Wishart, Eliza's sister. Confused about why Jasper would bring him here, Charlie begins to panic and says that he needs to tell someone about this. Jasper stops him and begins to explain that he doesn't believe Laura could've done this by herself because he always hides his rope, on which she is hanging, because it's too hard to get to the top of the tree and because she has been beaten up.

Charlie questions Jasper if he did this and Jasper denies it several times. He explains that this area of the woods is like his home and that no one has ever been there without him until now. When Charlie suggests again that they tell someone, Jasper stops him and says they can't because the cops will immediately blame and arrest him.

Jasper tells Charlie that they have to find out who did this but Charlie disagrees, stating that they need to tell the police and that Laura's family needs to know. Charlie realizes that Jasper likely will be in trouble and so they begin to brainstorm about what to do.



Charlie states that the police will come looking for Laura and he asks Jasper if he's ever brought Laura to this place.

It is then that Jasper reveals that he has and it starts to become clear that perhaps Jasper and Laura had a closer relationship than Jasper is admitting to. Although Charlie still believes that they should alert the officials and allow Laura's family the ability to grieve properly, Jasper is against this because he doesn't want to be immediately arrested.

Jasper convinces Charlie that their only option is to sink Laura's body in the adjacent dam until they can find out who did this. Charlie reluctantly helps Jasper accomplish this and, afterwards, Jasper and Charlie share an intimate conversation in which Jasper shares his many struggles of being misunderstood, growing up without a caring parent and wanting to making something better of himself. As it is morning, Charlie returns home with the knowledge that he is truly involved in this.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

In chapter 1, the reader is introduced to Jasper Jones and Charlie. Jasper is described as a slightly older and wiry young man with a reputation as the town's troublemaker. Charlie is described as thin, smart and interested in being a writer, which makes him different than his peers, who seem to be focused on who is the best at sports.

From the beginning it is clear that Charlie feels different from Jasper and that he is both scared and excited when Jasper arrives at his window one night, asking for his help. It doesn't take long, however, for Jasper and Charlie to have something in common because Jasper takes Charlie to his "home" in the woods where he found Laura Wishart hanging dead from a tree.

Charlie immediately wants to be uninvolved in this and suggests many times that they tell the authorities. Jasper, however, knows that the circumstances of Laura's death and his bad reputation will lead to his immediate arrest and he refuses to involve authorities. Instead, Jasper wants Charlie's help in temporarily moving the body and looking for the person who actually killed Laura.

Extremely reluctant, Charlie agrees to help because he knows that Jasper will likely be in trouble if they go the authorities. Through this process, the reader learns that Jasper and Laura had a deep connection and that they spent a lot of time at this place.

The reader also learns that Jasper feels misunderstood by the town and that they don't understand that he steals because he has to in order to survive. At the end of the chapter, Charlie knows he's involved and feels better that he's on Jasper's side but he still seems to wish that this problem would disappear.



# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

Charlie wakes up in chapter 2 and realizes that he slept late. At first, he doesn't remember what happened the night before but the memories of Laura and Jasper hit him hard after a few moments of being awake. Charlie has the eerie feeling that he is being watched and he expects to see police surrounding his house.

But he is not being watched and no one is there so he takes a bath, where he becomes anxious about whether or not Jasper killed Laura and why Jasper would have sought him out if he did. Charlie decides that he believes Jasper and that, in many ways, Jasper is the only one in town who speaks the whole truth.

After taking a bath, Charlie joins his parents in the kitchen. Initially, he is convinced that they know something because of the way they are looking at him. But then his dad makes a joke about how he's slept all day and Charlie knows that they know nothing. Charlie knows that his mom is annoyed with his sleeping all day, however, because of her use of sarcasm.

Charlie and his dad talk about the book Charlie is reading and, when his dad notices that he seems out of it and is not eating, Charlie's dad asks him if he's alright. Charlie says that he's just tired from having trouble sleeping and his mom suggests that he go visit with Jeffrey, as Jeffrey has been at the house several times today.

Charlie goes to Jeffrey's house, which is only four houses away from him, and feels like he won't make it because of how hot it is outside. Charlie is first greeted by Jeffrey's mom and then by Jeffrey, who quickly brings him into the living room to continue listening to the cricket match. Charlie and Jeffrey engage in a friendly debate about dying from steady exposure to heat or cold and they make themselves laugh by saying swear words that Jeffrey's mom doesn't know.

Just as he sits back to relax, Charlie remembers Laura and he feels the need to tell Jeffrey, thinking it might lessen his burden. But Charlie knows he can't say anything. After the cricket match and several board games, Jeffrey suggests that he and Charlie go into town to play cricket. On the way, Jeffrey and Charlie engage in another friendly debate about who the best superhero is- Superman or Batman.

Charlie feels that he squarely wins the debate but his mood instantly changes when he sees Eliza. By her manner, which he's always found somewhat intriguing, Charlie knows that she doesn't know about her sister's death. But Charlie wonders how she could be so calm when her sister is obviously missing. Charlie again feels the urge to take Eliza and tell her everything but, instead, he is tongue-tied and ends up barely saying anything to her, about which Jeffrey teases him.



When Jeffrey and Charlie reach the cricket nets, they see that they are occupied and that one of the occupants is Warwick Tent, someone who bullies Charlie on a regular basis for his use of sophisticated vocabulary. Charlie watches as Jeffrey tries to insert himself into the game, something he's tried to do unsuccessfully before. Jeffrey endures humiliation, racial slurs and physical prodding by Warwick, the other players and the coach.

Although he finds it hard to watch, Charlie isn't sure what to do. Just then, Eliza walks near the nets but Charlie can't get up the courage to talk to her, feeling a tight coil in his chest. After the game ends, Charlie and Jeffrey return home.

Charlie shares dinner with his parents but goes to his room afterwards to be alone. He tries to read but is distracted. He finds the book that he and Jeffrey tried to write together and soon finds that he has started writing as well. While falling asleep, he thinks of Eliza.

## Chapter 2 Analysis

Chapter 2 finds Charlie waking up the next day and almost immediately worrying about the situation with Laura. It is clear that Charlie's conscious is not settling well with his actions and the knowledge he has. He is distracted while talking with his parents and, even though spending the day with his friend, Jeffrey, provided many moments of relief, Charlie finds himself returning to thoughts of Laura any time there is a down moment.

Charlie finds it even more difficult to distract himself from his thoughts when he sees Laura's sister and his crush, Eliza, twice while out in the town with Jeffrey. Despite his already being nervous because of his crush on her, Charlie seems to have hard time interacting with her because he knows what happened to her sister but knows that she has no idea about it.

After his day out with Jeffrey, Charlie returns home and finds that he is still distracted. He tries to read but gravitates towards writing instead. He is also looking for Jasper and feels a strong need to talk to him but Jasper is nowhere to be found.

At the end of the chapter, Charlie gives up looking for Jasper and falls asleep thinking about Eliza. Additionally in chapter 2, the reader gets to see the dynamic between Charlie and Jeffrey, which is competitive but caring and friendly.





# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

When Charlie awakes in chapter 3, he immediately sees a wasp and hurries out of his room. Rather than go back in for clothes, he puts on dirty clothes from the hamper, which earns him a lecture from his mother. After a tense exchange about his clothes, Charlie and his mom have another tense exchange when she tells him that, if he leaves the house today, he is to either stay at Jeffrey's house or on the street where she can see him.

Charlie protests but she makes his choices clear and he remains silent. When his mom leaves the room, Charlie takes the opportunity to leave the house and he goes to Jeffrey's. But Jeffrey isn't able to hang out because he's grounded. He explains to Charlie that, while they were out of the house yesterday, his mom's friend came over to borrow something and Jeffrey's bird repeated all of the swear words they used.

Jeffrey's mom learned what the words meant and grounded Jeffrey from everything. Charlie decides to go to the library and he quickly becomes involved in reading true-crime books. He finds that, in some of the books, the infamous killers gave accounts of their crimes that were too horrific for him to read but he is compelled nevertheless.

Charlie turns to reading newspaper articles next and he gets involved in a story about Sylvia Likens, a 16 year old American girl who was tortured to death by her nanny and others. Charlie is disturbed by the events that led to Sylvia's death but he is almost more disturbed by the fact that no one else who participated in the torture said anything until after Sylvia's death. Feeling as though he read too much, Charlie leaves the library and heads for the bookstore.

After tripping on the sidewalk by the bookstore, Charlie runs into Eliza. Although he tries to be witty, Charlie finds that Eliza is outwitting him he gets even more nervous. He is delighted, however, when Eliza asks him to walk her home. On the way home, they talk about the book Eliza bought and her love for Audrey Hepburn.

Just before reaching her house, Eliza and Charlie stop to talk underneath a tree. Eliza shares with Charlie that her sister, Laura, has been missing for a day. Eliza talks about how her parents have been affected and she tells him that the police have been to her house to question the family. Charlie asks if her family or the police have any idea of what's happened to her and, after saying that no one has any idea, she shares that a search is being organized.

Charlie wants to comfort Eliza but feels that he would be fake in doing so, as he knows what happened to Laura. Eliza's mother finds them and screams at Eliza for leaving the house without telling anyone where she's going. As Eliza is walking her upset mother



back to their house, it hits Charlie that Eliza's calm demeanor seems to suggest that Eliza knows something.

When Charlie arrives home, he is greeted by his mother with several slaps in the face and demands to know where he's been, as there is a girl missing and she was worried about him. Charlie goes to his room but his mom follows him and demands that he dig a hole in the back yard. While digging, Charlie thinks that his mother has become cold and angry, most likely because she is unhappy in Corrigan.

When his mother returns, she tells him to stop digging and fill in the hole. Charlie argues back with his mother but she takes the shovel from him and tells him to fill it in by hand. Later, his father comes out and tells him stop. They talk about what his father knows regarding Laura's disappearance and, when back in his room, Charlie thinks again about his desperate need to see Jasper.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

Chapter 3 starts with Charlie getting into an argument with his mother about his choice to wear dirty clothes and about her request that he stay where she can see him today. Charlie goes to Jeffrey's house but when he finds out that Jeffrey is grounded, he decides to go to the library. Charlie finds himself reading about true crimes and about the infamous criminals that committed them.

He is disgusted but intrigued by the stories and they also cause him to think about the childhoods of the criminals and what led them to commit these crimes. He is particularly taken with a story about an American girl who was tortured to death by her nanny and others. What he finds most disturbing about this story is that none of the people who knew about the torture or who participated in it said anything until after the girl died.

Charlie leaves the library disturbed and goes to the bookstore, where he sees Eliza. He accepts her invitation to walk her home and they make a positive connection. But when they reach her house, Charlie learns that her family now knows that Laura is missing and that the police are involved. Charlie learns from his mother, who is extremely angry with him and punishes him severely, and from his father that the rest of the town knows about Laura's disappearance as well and that a search has started. Charlie needs to see Jasper more even now but Jasper is still nowhere to be found.

Additionally in chapter 3, the reader sees the developing negative relationship between Charlie and his mother. Charlie seems to think that she cares little for him and that she is taking her anger about how her life turned out on him.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

Chapter 4 begins with Charlie telling Jeffrey that he had a dream about The Wizard of Oz. Jeffrey and Charlie have a friendly argument about the different ways in which Dorothy's story could be told. Their conversation changes topics to the cricket game that Jeffrey missed but he states that he didn't miss anything because it rained.

Just then, Charlie goes still when he hears the sound of spotter planes in the distance. Feeling sure they are looking for him, Charlie tells Jeffrey that he is going to home and, when he gets there, he immediately retreats to his room for cover. Several hours later, Charlie hears a tapping at his window and knows that Jasper Jones has finally come back. But when he looks out the window, it's Jeffrey, who is excited about some news from the cricket game.

Jeffrey questions Charlie about the hole in his backyard, humorously implying for the second time that Charlie was involved in Laura's disappearance. Charlie tells Jeffrey that he had to dig the hole and fill it in as punishment. Throughout their conversation, Charlie notices that Jeffrey's body language seems to suggest that something is wrong.

Then, somewhat out of nowhere, Jeffrey tells Charlie that his aunt and uncle in Vietnam were killed by bombs associated with the war. Jeffrey says that he has two cousins who survived and that his parents are trying to bring them to live with them but they are having a hard time doing so. After several moments of awkward silence, Jeffrey and Charlie find themselves laughing through the tension and talking about cricket again.

Charlie also asks Jeffrey if he believes that other animals know that they are going to die someday. Jeffrey believes that they do not. Jeffrey says that, if given the choice, he would choose to know because, if he didn't know, he may not have the motivation to accomplish things in a timely manner.

When Jeffrey leaves to go home, Charlie can't help but notice that he's slumped over in a way he's never been before. Later that night, Charlie is watching the news with his dad when they see Laura Wishart's parents on the TV participating in a report about Laura's disappearance. Charlie's dad said he knew nothing about the report taking place and he seemed surprised and concerned. Charlie begins to ask questions about what the report means and Charlie's dad, Wes, says that it means Laura hasn't returned yet and that the need for concern may have risen a bit because Laura seems to have disappeared without a trace.

Wes says that the authorities are now aware that Laura regularly snuck out at night for long walks but always returned in the morning. Charlie's mom says that Wes shouldn't be telling Charlie any of this but, after she leaves, Charlie tells his dad that he needs to know if anyone knows who Laura was with. Wes says no one knows.



In his room later that night, Charlie wonders what will happen if they find Laura and if he and Jasper never find out who did this. As Charlie falls asleep wondering whether or not it would be better to know that you're dying, he realizes that Jasper still hasn't come back.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

Charlie's worry and paranoia about getting caught for his involvement in Laura's disappearance grows in chapter 4. When he hears the search planes overhead, he can't help but feel the desperate need to hide in his room. But, when Jeffrey comes to his room to hang out, he can't help but notice that something seems to be wrong with Jeffrey.

Jeffrey shares that his aunt and uncle in Vietnam were killed due to war actions and Charlie doesn't know what to say. They have a conversation about dying and about whether or not a person would want to understand the concept that they are going to die one day.

The biggest surprise and worry to Charlie in chapter 4 is when he sees Laura's parents on TV talking about Laura's disappearance. Charlie's father, Wes, is part of the city-organized search team and he tells Charlie that Laura's parents giving a report means that Laura hasn't returned yet and that she may have gotten further than they realized.

Charlie also learns that the authorities are aware that Laura regularly snuck out at night on long walks and that they are investigating if Laura was with someone. Going to sleep, Charlie wonders what will happen if he and Jasper never find out who did this to Laura. Jasper still has not returned to Charlie's house.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

Chapter 5 begins with Jasper Jones returning to Charlie's house however Charlie immediately begins thinking about what's happened in the week since he helped Jasper hide Laura's body. Charlie says that another draft went out in Corrigan and that the children of Corrigan were allowed again to play in the streets. He notes, however, that doors and windows were locked tight at night.

Charlie talks about a twilight town meeting that the police arranged in order to tell everyone what they knew. It turns out that they know virtually nothing and they urged people to come forward if they had any information about her disappearance. At that moment, Charlie feels completely alone and trapped in the town and by the people. After the meeting, Charlie and Jeffrey talk outside about the stupidity of the meeting and how the police probably wanted to hold the meeting just to get free food. As they're talking, they hear a commotion happening inside and, when they go in, Jeffrey and Charlie see Jeffrey's mom being verbally and almost physically attacked by one of the town members.

Jeffrey's mom offers no response and, after the chaplain escorts the other woman away, Jeffrey suggests to his mom that they should leave, too. After they leave, Charlie hears someone say Jasper's name and imply that he could be responsible for Laura's disappearance. Charlie wishes he or his father would stick up for Jasper but, as the town talks about Jasper, Charlie realizes for the first time that they may have done "the wrong thing for the right reasons."

The story returns to Jasper being at Charlie's window. Charlie notices that Jasper's face has bruises on it but Jasper says he'll explain them later. Jasper invites Charlie to sneak out with him again and, again, Jasper doesn't answer. They again end up at the place where Jasper found Laura's body. Jasper notes that the space feels strange, as if someone has been there, but he can't find any trace of anyone. They decide to sit and talk in the space and Charlie asks Jasper if he has any whiskey.

As they sit there and continue to drink, Charlie and Jasper talk about several different subjects. Jasper shares that the police sergeant and Laura's dad beat him up when the police brought him in for questioning. Jasper says they did this in order to get him to confess to being involved with Laura's disappearance. Jasper shares with Charlie that he knows Laura didn't run away from home because he and Laura were planning to leave together.

Jasper talks about the plans he and Laura had to run away to the city and have their own lives and Charlie wonders if Jasper needs his help or his company. Jasper then discusses how he believes that Mad Jack Lionel killed Laura and he discusses different points of evidence that he believes proves his case. Jasper says that he is responsible



for Laura's death no matter who did it because he believes that she was coming to look for him that night.

Jasper explains that he left Corrigan for a short period of time without telling Laura because he was trying to make money but also because he wanted some alone time. It's then that Jasper and Charlie notice the word "sorry" carved into the tree. After drinking and getting sick, Charlie decides that it's time for him to return home. As they walk through the town, Charlie and Jasper notice a lot of police activity and assume it's about Laura's case.

However, when Charlie gets to his street, he sees police cars and neighbors by his house. Jasper decides to go his separate way and Charlie assumes that he's been caught. But when Charlie walks down his street, he is greeted by his frantic mother who is ecstatic that he's not missing. She soon turns to anger about his leaving and the police and neighbors are surrounding Charlie. Charlie decides then that he's leaving Corrigan when Laura's case is solved.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

In chapter 5, the reader gets more information about what's been happening around town since Laura's disappearance. During a twilight town meeting, Charlie realizes that the police have little to no information about Laura's disappearance. However, he feels trapped by the town and by the people when the police urge anyone with information about Laura to step forward.

He also feels alone because he and Jasper are the only people who know what happened to Laura and Charlie hasn't seen Jasper since they moved Laura's body. When the town residents begin to talk about Jasper's probable involvement/guilt in Laura's disappearance, Charlie realizes that he and Jasper probably did the "wrong thing for the right reasons."

When Jasper comes to Charlie's window, he asks Charlie to sneak out with him again and they return to the place where they found Laura's body. While drinking, Charlie and Jasper talk and Jasper reveals that he and Laura were going to run away together. Jasper also reveals that he feels responsible for Laura's death because he left town without telling her and he believes that she left her house to find him.

The boys discover the word "sorry" carved into the base of the tree and they know that it's new. When Charlie returns home, he sees police cars outside of his house and assumes that he's going to be arrested. However he realizes that his parents thought he went missing and, as he's surrounded by the police and neighbors, Charlie decides that he's going to leave Corrigan as soon as Laura's case is resolved.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

Chapter 6 begins with Charlie sharing that he was supposed to be grounded until after the New Year but his parents eased up on his punishment so that he could go to Jeffrey's cricket game. Charlie tells the reader that on the night he got caught sneaking out with Jasper Jones, the police sergeant and his parents escorted him inside to question if he'd been with Jasper. Charlie realized that he is a good liar because he immediately came up with a story about how he has had a long-time crush on Eliza Wishart, that he was worried about her that night and snuck out to see her.

Charlie also stated that he'd been to see Eliza that day before. Charlie felt relieved when he realized that everyone seemed to believe his story. When the police left, Charlie was grounded by his mother but was surprised when she began yelling at his father rather than at him. His mother accused his father of being selfish and absent, among other things, and Charlie watched sadly as his mother, Ruth, attacked his father.

But Charlie couldn't feel happier as his father takes him to Jeffrey's cricket game. Charlie notices, however, that his relationship with his father has changed somehow. When Charlie gets to the cricket game, he learns that Jeffrey is actually going to be playing in the game because of an injury to another player. When Jeffrey is not being utilized in the game, he and Charlie talk about various topics. Then, when Jeffrey is called to play the game, he points out to Charlie that Eliza is there as well.

Charlie hesitantly goes to Eliza and feels awkward because he doesn't know what to say or do. Charlie notices that Eliza seems to have changed her physical appearance, accent and overall demeanor. He eventually asks how her family is doing and she begins to cry as she talks about the different ways in which her family members are dealing with Laura's disappearance. Regretting his decision to ask about this, Charlie makes Eliza laugh instead and their connection becomes more apparent.

As they continue to talk and laugh with one another, Charlie notices that Jeffrey is actually playing in the game. To everyone's surprise, Jeffrey demonstrates a high skill level and saves the game, becoming a town hero of sorts. After Jeffrey's big play, Eliza says that she's been waiting at the bookstore for Charlie to come by and, shortly afterwards, she kisses him. They decide to kiss again but, this time, they are interrupted by Jeffrey who is gloating about his performance and making awkward comments about Charlie and Eliza's kiss.

Charlie and Jeffrey have to leave but Charlie promises to see Eliza soon. After dinner that night, Charlie goes to his room and wishes to see Jasper. He thinks back to his last conversation with Jasper three days ago when Jasper discussed the proof he found that Jack Lionel is guilty of killing Laura- the word "sorry" etched into his car door. Charlie isn't as convinced because sorry is a word used by "good people who feel bad."



Confused and exhausted by all the facts, Charlie begins to think of Eliza and drift to sleep.

But he is awakened by a commotion outside and, when he looks out his window, he is shocked to see several men tearing up An Lu's (Jeffrey's dad) garden. Charlie screams for his dad when the men begin to beat An and he and his father run to help. Several other neighbors arrive to help as well but when the men eventually leave, it is clear they beat An badly and ruined his garden. Charlie and his parents play cards later in an effort to calm down but Charlie is not ok because of everything that's happened to Laura and Jeffrey and because he wants to tell Eliza the truth, knowing she will never forgive him.

## Chapter 6 Analysis

Chapter 6 begins with the resolution to Charlie getting caught sneaking out at the end of chapter 5. The reader learns that Charlie learns he is a very good liar when he spontaneously tells his parents and the police that he snuck out in order to check on Eliza Wishart, on whom he has a crush and about whom he was worried. Although Charlie was grounded for a long period of time, he is given a reprieve in order to go to Jeffrey's cricket game.

Charlie is happy to be out of his house but notices that his relationship with his father has changed and he finds himself sad about this. At the game, Charlie learns that Jeffrey will actually play in the game because of an injury to another player. Charlie's attention is distracted for part of the game, however, when he sees that Eliza is there.

While their interaction was initially awkward, Charlie and Eliza's connection grows and they eventually kiss several times. Meanwhile, Jeffrey is given the opportunity to play and he demonstrates his strong skills, winning the game and becoming a town hero. Jeffrey's joy is short lived, however, when several local men come to his house that night, beat his father and destroy his father's garden. Charlie and his father, as well as some other neighbors, help Jeffrey's father but Charlie finds himself shaken by the event.

Afterwards, Charlie feels the need to tell Eliza what happened to Laura but he knows Eliza will never forgive him. Also in this chapter, the reader learns that Jasper found the word "sorry" etched into Jack Lionel's car, convincing Jasper that Jack is guilty of killing Laura. But Charlie is not so convinced.





# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

At the beginning of chapter 7, Charlie is at Jeffrey's house and they are engaging in their usual banter about random topics and friendly arguing about who is right. At home that night, Charlie's dad asks if he's going to the fireworks and when he says no, his dad tells him that he has been writing a book and that he wants Charlie to be the first to read it. But before he can read it, Jasper shows up and says that tonight's the night he's going to confront Jack Lionel.

Charlie is hesitant to go at first but eventually goes with him. Charlie's heart is racing when they reach Jack's house but Charlie is surprised when Jack welcomes him and Jasper in and is friendly to Jasper. Jasper immediately accuses Jack of killing "her" and Jack initially admits his guilt. But when it becomes clear that Jasper is talking about Laura, Jack says that Jasper is wrong.

Jack points out several pictures in his living room and Jasper and Charlie soon learn that Jack is Jasper's grandfather, his father's father. Jack explains that he banished Jasper's father, David, from the house when he and Jasper's mother, Rosie, decided to keep the baby (Jasper). Jack and Rosie eventually became good friends and then, one day, Rosie had a strong pain in her stomach. As Jack rushed her to the hospital, they got into a car accident and Rosie died.

Jack also told Jasper and Charlie what he saw the night Laura died- Laura walking past his house and someone following her. Back at home later that night, Charlie gets another knock on his window but this time it's not Jasper, it's Eliza, and she says that she knows where Laura is. Charlie follows Eliza through the town and he realizes they're going to Jasper's place. On the way, Charlie sees his car parked by the river. As he approaches, he sees his mother being intimate with another man in the car and it's not his father.

Charlie and his mother argue when he catches them but he tells her that he doesn't have to listen to her anymore. Charlie and Eliza leave and continue towards Jasper's place in the woods. When they arrive, Eliza produces a note written from Laura to Jasper and says that it's her fault that Laura's dead. She goes on to explain that on the night of Laura's death, she heard Laura and her father having a verbal and physical fight. Afterwards Eliza saw Laura leave, as she had seen her do many times with Jasper, and she followed Laura.

When they arrived to Jasper's place, Eliza watched as Laura wrote a note, climbed the tree and fell, hanging herself. Eliza blames herself for not stopping Laura. She tells Charlie that the note reveals that their father had been visiting Laura's room at night for many years, that she now had something inside that was worse than disease and that she had to leave town that night. Laura says in her note that she tried to tell their mother



but that she didn't believe Laura. Charlie believes these events and reveals that he and Jasper found Laura and hid her body in the dam because Jasper was sure that someone killed Laura and he didn't want to be blamed for it. When Jasper shows up to the woods, Eliza gives him the note and tells him everything.

She says she's going to tell the police and Jasper says she should do what she believes is right. On their way back into town in the morning, Jasper stops at Jack's house and says he's going to talk to him. Charlie feels this is the last time he'll see Jasper. Charlie and Eliza are stopped by the police, who have been out searching for them, and taken to the police station. Eliza goes in and Charlie waits. When she's escorted out by her parents, Charlie wonders what she told the police.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

Chapter 7 contains the climax of the book as the truth about Laura's death is revealed. Several other important facts are revealed as well regarding Jasper's relationship with Jack Lionel and about the actions of Charlie's mom. The first important information to be revealed is about Jack Lionel. When Jasper and Charlie show up to Jack's house to accuse him of killing Laura, Jack takes the blame for killing someone but not Laura.

He reveals that he is Jasper's grandfather, his father's father, and that he was responsible for the death of Jasper's mother. He explains everything in detail and it's clear that it was an accident. Jasper has no response at this time. Jack also reveals that he saw someone following Laura on the night of her death. The details of Laura's death are revealed when Eliza shows up to Charlie's window and urges him to sneak out with her, saying that she knows where Laura is.

Charlie realizes that Eliza is taking them to Jasper's place in the woods but, on the way, Charlie catches his mother having an affair. They argue and she demands that he go home but he has lost all respect for her and tells her as much. When Charlie and Eliza arrive at Jasper's place in the woods, Eliza produces a letter that Laura wrote to Jasper and she says that Laura's death is her fault. On the night of Laura's death, Eliza heard Laura and their father get into a physical and verbal fight.

Eliza saw Laura leave her window, as she saw her do many times with Jasper, and she decided to follow her. She followed Laura to Jasper's place in the woods, write Jasper a note, climb the tree and hang herself. Eliza expresses deep guilt for not stopping her to Charlie. Through the letter, the text suggests that Laura's father had been coming to her room at night for years, that Laura was pregnant by her father, that her mother did not believe her and that she left that night to leave with Jasper immediately.

Jasper learns the truth as well that night and, in the morning, stays behind to talk with Jack and possibly leave Corrigan afterwards. Charlie and Eliza are caught by the police, who have been out looking for them, and Eliza is questioned. Charlie wonders what she told them.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

Chapter 8 provides the reader with follow-up information about the numerous events that happened in chapter 7. The chapter begins by stating that Charlie did not leave Corrigan as he and Eliza had thought about doing. Instead, Charlie shares that his mother left Corrigan, him and his father. Charlie informs the reader that she left the night she was caught with the other man but that she didn't leave before making a scene in their home that the neighborhood heard.

Charlie's mother screamed, fought, threw things and cried to his father but, like always, his father stood like a statue and allowed her to do it. She also came into Charlie's room and tore it apart, stealing his suitcase. Charlie's father was not surprised by her affair and Charlie wonders why his father never said anything about her affair before but he watched as his father allowed his mother to leave.

Charlie's mother has not returned in the 2 weeks since she's left. She has called once and spoken to his father but she will not speak to Charlie to try and repair their relationship. She is living back in the city with her family and has returned to being their spoiled child, free of the restraints that were her family. Charlie has taken up the cooking in the house and realizes that he enjoys it. His father has allowed his bald spot to start showing, has started growing a beard and enjoys keeping the house clean.

Charlie finally got around to reading his father's book and he found it so beautiful that he is no longer jealous but proud that his father's name will be on a public bookshelf one day. The reader also learns that, despite hours of police interrogation fueled by their certainty that she knew something, Eliza didn't say one word to the police.

However while her father was out of the house, Eliza sat her mother down and shared Laura's letter with her. Eliza told her mother that she followed Laura the night she died and that she watched her take her own life and the life of the baby inside of her. Eliza told her mother that she knows where Laura is but that, until her mother is ready to come forward with the truth, she will not say another word.

Eliza and her mother have remained silent about the issue and Eliza feels that it will stay this way. Eliza and Charlie continue to get closer, however, and they spend a lot of time at night at Jasper's place in the woods. Both Charlie and Eliza feel calm when they are in Jasper's place in the woods and Charlie knows that he wants to marry Eliza. He knows that he will have the courage to tell her one day.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

In chapter 8 the reader learns how the events in chapter 7 affected the lives of the characters. The reader first learns that, after being caught in her affair by Charlie,



Charlie's mother leaves their family and Corrigan. After tearing the house apart and screaming at Charlie and his father, she left in a hurry the same night she was caught and returned to the spoiled life she led in the city with her family.

Charlie was surprised to learn that his father knew about his mother's actions all along and, although Charlie sometimes missed the familiarity of his mother being in the house, he was enjoying the new arrangement he and his father were making.

The reader also learns in chapter 8 that Eliza did not reveal any information to the police, although they interrogated her for hours due to their certainty that she knows something. Eliza did, however, share Laura's letter with their mother and confirmed that Laura took two lives that night. Eliza tells her mother that she knows where Laura is but will not reveal her location until her mother comes forward with the truth, which she has not yet done.

Finally, the reader sees Charlie and Eliza's relationship develop further in chapter 8. They spend many nights at Jasper's place in the woods and feel calm there. Charlie knows that, one day, he will express his love to Eliza and ask her to marry him.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

Chapter 9 brings the start of the school year for the town of Corrigan. Charlie hears the gossip of Laura being talked about for hours, Jasper Jones is nowhere to be found and Jeffrey Lu has become a minor celebrity. Warwick Trent is also back in school because he didn't get an apprenticeship and because he is the father of a classmate's child and has no other options. Because Warwick is back in school, Charlie finds himself walking to Jack Lionel's house after school the first day with a large crowd following him.

Charlie made a bet with Warwick Trent that if Charlie can go onto Jack Lionel's property and return with more than four peaches he will be granted immunity for the whole year. Since Charlie knows that he can easily do this, he agreed to be put through a cruel punishment if he fails. As Charlie and the crowd are walking to Jack's house, Eliza approaches Charlie and Charlie notices that she looks pale and that she isn't smiling. She says that she is not coming because she has somewhere to be but she won't say where.

When Charlie asks if he'll see her later that night, Eliza states that he may see her before then and that she has to go. Charlie wants to follow her because he knows that something is wrong but he is bound to follow through on his bet with Warwick. As they continue to walk to Jack's house, Jeffrey tries to talk Charlie out of doing this, stating that Charlie is "insane" and that he is putting himself in significant danger. When Jeffrey sees that Charlie is not backing down, he says that he will go into the yard with Charlie.

Charlie tells Jeffrey that he can't but Charlie tells Jeffrey that he is the best friend he will ever have. When Charlie gets to Jack's house, he walks through the gate without any hesitation or fear. But when he reaches the peach tree, he sees that there are no peaches left on it. As Charlie stares at the tree wondering what to do, Jack appears and says that all of the peaches fell and that the only good ones left are the rotting ones on the ground. It doesn't escape Charlie that the peaches are surrounded by bees.

Charlie says that kids from school are watching him and that he'll explain later but he requests to take the peaches and Jack allows him to take as many as he wants. Jack also tells him not to worry about the bees because the rotting and fermenting peaches have made the bees drunk. Charlie sees that he's right and he asks if he can come over for dinner. Jack is excited. As Charlie leaves Jack's property Jack, playing along, comes out the front of his house with a rifle and makes himself out to be the guy everyone thinks he is.

Charlie plays along and pretends to push him backwards, taking the gun from him. Everyone thinks that Charlie is a hero but Charlie and Jack know that the hardest thing for Charlie that day was getting the peaches from the bees. It isn't long, however, before



Charlie and the rest see a large cloud of smoke rising from the sky. Charlie runs towards it and he quickly sees that Eliza's house is on fire.

He is relieved to see that Eliza is ok- she is standing with her mom. Her dad is on the lawn being attended to by the ambulance crew but he looks to be ok. Eliza is watching her house burn and she looks to have little emotion about it. Charlie hears people suggesting that Jasper Jones did this but Charlie knows that Jasper left Corrigan for good. When Charlie approaches Eliza, she gives him a small smile and he finds the words to tell her exactly how he feels.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

Chapter 9 brings a close to the book. The chapter begins with Charlie and his friends going back to school. He notices that Jasper isn't there to sign up for football, that everyone is still talking about Laura's disappearance, that everyone knows about what his mom did and that Jeffrey is still a minor celebrity because of his cricket performance. But one thing that sticks out to Charlie is that Warwick Trent is back in school.

In an effort to gain immunity from Warwick's torture, Charlie makes a bet that he can get five peaches from Jack Lionel's property. To everyone else this seemed to be an impossible task but because Charlie knows Jack, he knows that he can do this. On the way there, he sees Eliza and knows something is wrong. She seems to be hiding something when she won't say where she needs to go and when she says that Charlie may see her earlier than that night.

After finding the courage to reach into the bees to get the rotting peaches from Jack's yard, making dinner plans with Jack and putting on a show for the kids at school to imply that he overtook "Mad Jack Lionel," Charlie and the rest see smoke rising from the town. Charlie soon learns that Eliza's house is on fire and when he arrives at the scene he is happy to see that she's ok.

The text reveals that Eliza has no response to this, therefore suggesting that she may have had something to do with it. Charlie knows that it wasn't Jasper Jones, as the town suggested, because he knows that Jasper left Corrigan for good. Amid the fire, Charlie finds the right words to tell Eliza how he feels about her.



# Characters

## Charles

Charlie is one of the main characters of the book. He is a 13 year old boy who is picked on at school for being smart, having a good vocabulary, being liked by the teachers and making good grades. In his spare time, he enjoys reading and especially writing. He doesn't consider himself to be a particularly brave person but his courage is tested from the beginning of the book when the town trouble maker, Jasper Jones, comes to his window at night and asks for his help.

When Charlie sees that Jasper needs help moving the dead body of Laura Wishart, he immediately wants to get the authorities involved. However he ultimately helps Jasper because he knows that Jasper will be blamed for Laura's death no matter what. The reader is able to see Charlie come into his own as the book progresses.

Scared of getting into any trouble when the book begins, Charlie finds himself smoking, drinking, lying to his parents, continuing to sneak out at night and standing up to his mom, with whom he has a tumultuous relationship, and learning how to voice his feelings to Eliza.

Overall Charlie is a well-intentioned, smart, thoughtful and caring person who finds himself involved in a precarious situation. In the process of living with his guilt, sadness, worry and confusion about what he's done, he learns to find and use his own voice.

## Jasper Jones

Jasper is one of the main characters in the book. He is a 14 year old boy who is known in his hometown of Corrigan as the trouble maker. The text suggests that some of Jasper's reputation is his own doing while sometimes the town members utilize him as a scapegoat. The reader learns that Jasper's mother died when he was young and that his father is highly uninvolved in his life. Jasper doesn't do particularly well in school but he is known for his superior football skills.

Despite his reputation, the text suggests that he is sensitive and misunderstood and that he is admired and respected by many of his peers. Jasper's character is depicted to be a loner and he has a spot in the woods that he frequents and even uses as a home sometimes, referred to in the book as "Jasper's Glade." This glade is where he finds the body of Laura Wishart, his secret girlfriend, hanging from the tree that he uses as shelter.

Jasper is convinced that he will be blamed for Laura's death so he convinces Charlie to help him hide Laura's body while they search for the real killer. As the book progresses, it becomes clear that Jasper was close with Laura, considered her to be his best friend



and had a plan to leave Corrigan with her. There were many points in the book where Jasper's character revealed a softer, more thoughtful side.

Jasper was convinced that the killer was "Mad Jack Lionel" but, when Jasper confronted Jack, he learned that Jack is his grandfather. Jasper eventually learns the truth about Laura's death and, when he does, he follows through with his plan and leaves Corrigan for good.

## Jeffrey Lu

Jeffrey is Charlie's best friend. The reader learns that Jeffrey and his family are Vietnamese and the text suggests that they left Vietnam because of the war. Jeffrey is also described as smart, somewhat arrogant, sarcastic and funny and he and Charlie have a friendly competition between them when discussing various issues.

Jeffrey also possesses superior cricket skills but he is not allowed on the team until late in the book. Jeffrey is also picked on frequently because of his size and ethnicity however, because of his ability to handle the constant teasing with grace, Charlie often thinks of Jeffrey as the bravest person he knows.

## Eliza Wishart

Eliza is Charlie's classmate and crush. She is also the younger sister of Laura Wishart. She is described as shy at first but it becomes clear that she is not as Charlie gets to know her. Eliza likes Audrey Hepburn and models her appearance and behavior after Audrey's characters. She and Charlie develop a romantic relationship throughout the story.

The text suggests several times that Eliza isn't reacting to Laura's disappearance quite like anyone would expect and she appears to know something. It isn't until chapter 7 that Eliza reveals that she knows exactly what happened to Laura, although she never reveals what she knows to the police. She does, however, tell her mother, but she vows to only reveal Laura's final resting place when her mother comes forward with the truth about their father's involvement in Laura's death.

At the end of the book, Eliza's house catches on fire and she is described as standing outside watching with no emotion. The text suggests numerous times that Eliza was somehow involved in the fire that consumed her house.

## Laura Wishart

Eliza's older sister and Jasper's secret girlfriend. She is found hanging from "Jasper's tree" and Jasper and Charlie sink her body in the dam to give them time to find the real killer. As the story progresses, the reader learns that Jasper and Laura snuck out to this place almost every night and that they had a plan to leave Corrigan together.





Through a letter that Laura wrote to Jasper, the reader learns that Laura's father visited her room at night regularly, that she was pregnant by her father, that her mother did not believe her and that she hung herself out of hopelessness.

## **Jack ("Mad Jack Lionel")**

A town resident of Corrigan with the reputation that he killed a girl many years ago, that he is "crazy" and that he will shoot anyone on his property. The kids of Corrigan often tested each other's courage by their willingness to steal peaches from his property.

Chapter 7 reveals that Jack is Jasper's grandfather and that he was responsible for killing a girl - Jasper's mother - when he was driving her to the hospital for an emergency. After her death, Jack was shunned from the community. He is actually a caring and thoughtful but lonely old man whom Charlie befriends at the end of the story.

## **Wesley Bucktin**

Charlie's father. He is described as quiet and withdrawn but patient and affectionate in his own ways. He is a literary teacher and finishes his own book by the end of the story, which Charlie describes as beautiful. There are many times that he allows Charlie's mother to yell at him throughout the story and he allows himself to be his own person when she leaves. Wesley also helps in the search for Laura and he is helpful to Jeffrey's family when town members are attacking them.

## **Ruth Bucktin**

Charlie's mother. She is described as unhappy, resentful, demanding and impatient. She is from the city and is angry about living in Corrigan. She takes out her anger on Charlie and his father and, in chapter 7, the reader learns that she has been having an affair. Ruth leaves Charlie, his father and Corrigan and doesn't return.

## **An Lu**

Jeffrey's father. He is described as quiet and unassuming and he is known for his beautiful garden. He and his garden are attacked at one point in the book by angry neighbors who blame him when they lose their jobs.

## **Mrs. Lu**

Jeffrey's mother. She is described as loving but strict and Jeffrey and Charlie sometimes play harmless language tricks on her because she doesn't yet know English well. She is also attacked by neighbors at meetings but it seems that the root of their attacks is based on their sons being drafted into the Vietnam War.

## **Warwick Trent**

The class bully who tortures Charlie and Jeffrey.



## **Objects/Places**

### **Corrigan, Australia**

The main setting of the novel.

### **Jasper's Glad**

Jasper's secret hideaway in the woods.

### **Jasper's Tree**

The tree where Jasper took shelter at night and from which Laura Wishart hung herself.

### **The Oval**

The part of town where people gathered to watch and play sports events.

### **The Bookstore**

Location frequented by Eliza and Charlie and where they met several times.

### **Peaches**

Collected by neighborhood kids to prove their courage and earn the respect of their peers.

### **The Dam**

Part of Jasper's glade and final resting place for Laura Wishart.

### **Pope on a Rope**

Novel written by Charlie and Jeffrey.

### **Charlie's Suitcase**

Where he keeps his writings.

## **Patterson's Curse**

The novel written by Charlie's father.



# Themes

## Doing the Right Thing

Jasper Jones contains a number of key moral conflicts based around keeping secrets and making promises concerning the death of Laura Wishart. The story begins as Charlie Bucktin is approached by Jasper Jones, the town trouble-maker, who claims to have found his girlfriend, Laura, dead. Jasper believes that he will be blamed for Laura's death and asks Charlie to promise him not to tell anyone what happened and to help him hide the body until he (Jasper) can find out who committed the murder. Charlie agrees, though he immediately feels guilty as he wants to tell the police. In one case, Charlie is terrified that the police already know of his involvement.

However, Charlie regrets his promise for two overarching two reasons.

The first reason is that Charlie has to plead ignorance when the townspeople begin to search for Laura. In a variety of circumstances, Charlie could have helped the search and told the truth about where Laura was (as he and Jasper had placed her body at the bottom of a dam). For instance, he was once at a town meeting about Laura's death where someone threw out Jasper's name, causing Charlie to feel guilty. Though in this case, Charlie realized that keeping quiet really had saved Jasper.

The second reason is that Charlie gradually grows closer to Laura's sister Eliza and often wants to tell her what he knows. Because Charlie knows that Eliza would want to know what happened to her sister, he is conflicted about keeping his promise, often wondering what the right thing to do is given his circumstances.

## Friendship

Friendship is an important theme of Jasper Jones due to the critical importance of good friendships given all of the issues that the main characters must grapple with, from the death of a loved one, to covering up a (purported) murder, to dealing with familial dysfunction. Friendship is not merely a coping mechanism for the main characters but also a deep source of meaning and value in a world where they often felt powerless and predetermined by their circumstances.

Three friendships call out for comment, all of which were maintained or had by Charlie. The first significant friendship was between Charlie and Jasper. While at the beginning of the book Charlie is not really friends with Jasper, he feels honored that Jasper would ask him to help him hide Laura's body. The friendship, though, was based on a great deal of trust between the two. On the one side, Charlie had to trust that Jasper was telling the truth about Laura, something he was not completely sure of throughout much of the book. And on the other side, Jasper had to trust Charlie to keep his promise to not tell anyone about Laura.



The next friendship is between Charlie and Jeffrey. Their relationship is rooted in respect. Jeffrey was often made fun of at school and Jeffrey's family was often attacked by the townspeople because of their Vietnamese descent. But Jeffrey still maintained a positive, accepting outlook. And so Charlie realized how much respect he had for Jeffrey.

The final and perhaps most important friendship is Charlie's friendship and later romantic attachment to Eliza. Not only must they jointly endure the tragedy of Eliza's sister Laura's death. Eliza is the only other person who knows about what really happened to Laura's body and, in fact, Eliza knows that Laura had killed herself due to intense psychological suffering and stress. So the two are able to bond based on their shared experience with tragedy.

## Family Dysfunction

Perhaps the most obvious theme of *Jasper Jones* is that of family dysfunction. Most of the main families in the book are deeply dysfunctional, including Charlie's family, Jasper's family and Laura and Eliza's family. Charlie's family was dysfunctional because Charlie's mother felt isolated from her family and city life after moving to their small town. As a result, she was mean to Charlie and took out her anger and frustration on him and her father. Charlie also later discovers that his mother is having an affair with another man and then she decides to leave the two of them and cut off contact.

Jasper's family is dysfunctional because he at one point believes that the scary old man in town, "Mad" Jack Lionel, may have killed Laura. But it turns out that Jack is Jasper's paternal grandfather. Jasper had no relationship with him because Jack was driving Jasper's mother to the hospital when they got in a car wreck and she died. So Jack hid himself from Jasper's life.

Finally, the Wishart family was especially dysfunctional. One of the climactic points in the book occurs when Charlie discovers that Laura committed suicide because she was pregnant with her father's baby and her mother wouldn't believe her. She felt that there was no real way out. Eliza is caught up in the intense distress that she feels knowing about Laura's terrible secret.



# Style

## Point of View

Jasper Jones is told from the point of view of Charlie, the main character of the book. The book is told exclusively from his perspective, in the first-person. We are rarely, if ever, directly acquainted with the internal thought life of others and the relevant information in the book is typically fed to the reader through Charlie's outlook on life. Further, the book is told in ordinary chronological order, without large gaps in the timeline of events.

Charlie is a teenager and somewhat anxious. He is worried about being moral, and is often wracked with guilt. So much of the book is filled with his concerns, especially in his involvement with Jasper.

He is not the most talkative and is more observant, so much of the book is reported as a spectator and not as a participant in core book events. But he also describes his sensory experiences, such as being hot, sweaty or concerns. This perspective reflects his somewhat shy nature. He only has one good friend, though he gets to know other people, but mostly worries about matters in his head. Charlie is by no means a perfect empath, but his character judgments are typically apt.

Charlie also likes to write, which is recorded in the book. His own writing connects him to his father, who he believes writes often in his office. This concern with writing, with more solitary narration, reflects the point of view of the book as a whole.

## Setting

Jasper Jones is set in Corrigan, Australia during the Vietnam War. The book never gives a particular year of the conflict, though the presumption is that it occurs in the later part of the war, in the early 1970s. The town is a suburb of larger city, and is small enough to where the city has a more local community feel, with townspeople who know one another. Charlie's mother, for instance, feels trapped in Corrigan, in a place where there is not as much to do as when she lived in the city.

There is a lot of tension in Corrigan, which while not explicitly addressed, largely concerns disagreement over the Vietnam War. Some have moved to Corrigan to avoid going to war, whereas other townspeople support the war. Further, there are racial tensions, evidenced by blue collar miners attacking a Vietnamese man's home (Jeffrey's father). So tension occasionally erupts, but this is mostly background for the story.

The book happens entirely in the summer, as they spend a lot of time outside. Laura Wishart, for instance, commits suicide in Jasper's Eucalypt, which was itself located in a local glade. So some of the settings in the book are hidden from general view, known only to the teenagers in the book. Another important setting is the more public town



park, which has the cricket field, so other settings are in the public view. But in general the settings can be understood as occurring against a complex backdrop of adults with their own concerns, and the teenage main characters with their own concerns.

## Language and Meaning

Jasper Jones is largely composed of dialogue, with Charlie adding commentary of his own. So some of the language of the book describes Charlie's inner thought life. The book is not at all hard to understand. There are few hard vocabulary words, nor are there complex concepts that require terms of art. However, there are numerous colloquialisms drawn from Australian culture.

In many cases, the language reflects Charlie's own emotional states. Given that he is anxious, the language of the book and its meaning will reflect that anxiety. Given the tensions, there is a great deal of cussing, especially between Jeffrey and Charlie. They also make a lot of sarcastic remarks, so the language is in some times characteristic of the sorts of put downs and friendly insults characteristic of teenage boys.

The book contains a lot of argument between Charlie and his mother over a variety of topics. Charlie's mother is unhappy with her own life and so does not come across as a very loving person in Charlie's eyes. So the language in these portions of the book turns darker.

The language of the book does contain foreshadowing, however, so while Charlie is not aware of future events, the author is still able to give the reader a vague sense for what is coming without this reaching Charlie's awareness. But there is little symbolism in the book, as the language mostly tells a straightforward story in a straightforward method.

## Structure

Jasper Jones is divided into nine chapters, without subsections. The chapters are long, as the book is over three hundred pages in length. So the generic structure of the book is about as uncomplicated as a novel gets. The book occurs in chronological order, there is no major change of point of view, no change in time save the gradual unfolding of the book. There are no flashbacks and there is no deep symbolism. The book therefore has a simple form.

There is an unresolved tension in the book that begins with Jasper coming to Charlie's window. The first sentence of the book has Jasper ask Charlie to be involved with covering up Laura's death. What the reader does not know is whether or not Jasper actually killed Laura and how it is going to be resolved. Since Jasper is the local bad boy, many assume that he must have been involved, but it is clear to the reader from the beginning that Jasper is probably not the culprit. As more is revealed, it becomes clearer that Jasper did not kill her, but it is clear that he's hiding the details of her death. A constant tension in the book is whether he is going to reveal what he knows to the townspeople.





The book climaxes in Chapter Seven. Eliza tells Charlie that she knows where Laura is located. Charlie likes Eliza and knows where Laura is buried, but can't bring himself to tell her. But Eliza knew herself, and she then tells him how Laura died. Later Charlie and Eliza tell Jasper how Laura died. Laura committed suicide because she was pregnant with her father's child and her mother did not believe her. A smaller climax in the book is that Eliza is not going to tell her mother where Laura is buried unless she turns her father in to the police.



## Quotes

"I can't. I can't, mate. But I can trust you, Charlie. I reckon I can trust you." (1, 9)

"We got to bury her. Hide her. Here. Ourselves." (1, 21)

"Are we okay to do this? Aren't they patrolling." (5, 135)

"It won't be for a while, anyway, I don't reckon. Not until we can get enough on Mad Jack Lionel." (5, 144)

"Listen, I'll come round soon. Remember: don't say nothing. G'luck, mate." (5, 160)

"Because I would have waited. All day. Until they closed." (6, 179)

"Charlie, I know it were him. I can prove it." (6, 200)

"I knew you'd come, Charlie. I knew you'd do the right thing." (7, 233)

"Jasper, listen to me, I know you're upset. I know it. You know, though, I always thought you'd've found out before now. I though that's why you never come to see me. Who finally told you? Your dad? Or have you known all this time?" (7, 238)

"Your mother's." (7, 240)

"Charlie, I know where Laura is." (7, 250)

"I killed her. It's all my fault. I killed Laura." (7, 258)

"It was you who carved that word." (7, 269)

"Just somewhere." (9, 298)

"Look." (9, 306)



## Topics for Discussion

Given that Jasper Jones is not one of the main characters in the book, why do you think the book is named after him?

Why did people think that Jasper was responsible for Laura's disappearance? What was the actual cause of her disappearance?

Explain Laura's reason for committing suicide. Do you find the explanation of her motivation plausible? Why or why not?

Jasper Jones is told from Charlie's perspective. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story from his point of view rather than, say, switching perspectives between the different teenagers? How does the story unfolding from Charlie's perspective add to the book?

Both Charlie and Eliza have kept a secret from one another, what turns out to be the same secret. What secret is this? Why don't they tell each other sooner?

Explain the role and importance of the Vietnam War in the book.

A key theme in the book is doing the right thing. How do moral requirements affect Charlie? What does he think he is doing wrong? And why does he do it anyway?