

The Knife of Never Letting Go Study Guide

The Knife of Never Letting Go by Patrick Ness

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

The Knife of Never Letting Go Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-3.....	5
Chapters 4-7.....	8
Chapters 8-11.....	11
Chapters 12-18.....	14
Chapters 19-25.....	20
Chapters 26-31.....	25
Chapters 32-36.....	29
Chapters 37-42.....	33
Characters.....	37
Symbols and Symbolism.....	40
Settings.....	42
Themes and Motifs.....	44
Styles.....	48
Quotes.....	49

Plot Summary

"The Knife of Never Letting Go" by Patrick Ness, takes place in the unspecified future on a planet that is simply referred to as "the new world." The main character, Todd, gradually explains to readers the state of this new world. He lives in a small town, Prentisstown, where he's the last boy. Everyone else in the small community is a man, which happens when they turn 13. All of the women were killed off by an alien race known as the Spackle. The Spackle released a genetic weapon on humankind, infecting them with something called the Noise germ.

The Noise germ gave all of the humans and animals the ability to mentally communicate with one another. Todd was told that the women were simply killed off by the virus. The book starts with Todd exploring the swamp, gathering apples for his adoptive parents, Ben and Cillian. Todd is accompanied by his dog, Manchee. While exploring the swamp, they find something that emanates pure silence, something that has been unheard of since the Noise virus was released.

When Todd returns home his Noise leaks the news about the silence. Ben and Cillian grimly pack supplies for Todd, explaining that they knew this day was going to come. Ben hands Todd a journal that was written by his mother, and a map that will take him somewhere new. He can't go into more details, since otherwise it will be possible for the others to read his Noise.

Todd is forced to leave while the town descends on Ben and Cillian. While running from his town, Todd encounters the silence again. He finds out that it's from a girl, Viola. Viola is being pursued by Aaron, a preacher from Prentisstown. Todd saves Viola and the two run away from Aaron. They follow the map which leads to another settlement, Farbranch.

Todd is shocked because everything he had been told is turning out to be a lie. He thought there were no other settlements, and he certainly thought there were no women alive. Farbranch is a mixed gender town, which looks down upon the people of Prentisstown. Todd doesn't get the chance to find out why, as the Prentisstown army starts to march, led by Mayor Prentiss himself. Todd and Viola are forced to flee Farbranch, which is destroyed by the army.

Todd and Viola plan to travel to Haven, supposedly the first and largest settlement. Along the way they find other settlements and gradually begin to learn more details about what really happened. Viola reveals that she came from a scouting ship and that new settlers are looking to land on the planet. At other settlements, Todd learns that the men of Prentisstown are looked down upon as outlaws for starting a war with the Spackle and killing off all their women.

Todd and Viola are pursued not only by the army, but by Aaron. Aaron manages to catch up to them, but Manchee gives his life so they are able to escape. Todd begins to piece together what Aaron wants. Aaron believes that the men of Prentisstown are part of an



army sent by God. When the boys become men, they are required to kill someone to prove that they are a strong and loyal soldier. Since Todd is the last boy, Aaron's sacrifice is supposed to be special. They learn that Aaron's death is supposed to be a blessing for the Prentisstown army to march and take over the planet, turning it into their new Eden.

Aaron ends up cornering Todd and Viola outside of Haven. Aaron tries to get Todd so enraged that he'll kill him. Todd wants to, but Viola stops him, killing Aaron herself. They start to enter Haven, but Viola is shot right outside the entrance. Todd brings her into Haven, shouting for help. Mayor Prentiss reveals himself, telling Todd that he has already taken the city. The book ends with Todd surrendering to Prentiss, desperate for his assistance to save Viola.



Chapters 1-3

Summary

Chapter 1

The book begins with the main character, Todd, out in the swamps searching for apples. He's accompanied by his dog, Manchee. Todd and the rest of his people are able to hear the thoughts of other people and animals. This is referred to as the Noise. The Noise allows Todd and Manchee to communicate with one another. Todd is upset because boys are the only ones ever sent out into the swamp. He's about to become of age himself, once he turns 13. Todd starts getting upset and angry, which leads to him being attacked by an older man, Aaron. Aaron chastises Todd for thinking his negative thoughts and swearing. Aaron beats Todd and leaves. Todd has no idea what Aaron was doing out in the swamps to begin with.

While gathering apples, Todd notices there's something nearby that doesn't have any Noise at all. Todd worries that it might be the Spackle. The Spackle are the people that have attacked Todd and his people in the past. They deployed the Noise germ, which is why they can hear the Noise. All of the women died, and most of the men were driven mad. Todd runs out to try and find this spot of silence in the Noise, but it vanishes before he can reach it.

Chapter 2

Todd returns back home. He has to pass through the town, which makes him expound on the state of the world. Prentisstown is the last beacon of civilization, the start of the new world according to Mayor Prentiss, the man who was able to save the town during the war. The town only consists of about 150 men. The population is on a steady decline. Many of the men struggle with depression over being the last ones left alive, and suicide isn't uncommon. It's impossible for anyone to hide their thoughts from one another, and everyone is frequently thinking about the war and what was lost.

Aaron preaches at the church, saying that this is the New World, a new Eden. They have been chosen to leave behind the old world. Everyone is required to go to church by the Mayor, even though he, himself, barely goes. There's no school anymore, and men are just taught basic hunting and survival skills. The Mayor believes that the Noise can be channeled and controlled. He spends most of his time with his trusted men trying to control the Noise through meditation and repeating mantras.

Todd is trying not to think about the silence in the Noise that he found in the swamp. As he passes through town he realizes that it's too late and his Noise is already leaking throughout the town. Now everyone knows that he found "silence."

Chapter 3



Todd finally makes it to the farm where he lives. He lives there with Ben and Cillian, who essentially act as his adopted parents. Ben used to be friends with Todd's real parents before the war. They convinced him to get into the ship for the new world. Cillian is a friend of Ben's. When Todd's real parents died, they took care of him. Todd knows he was lucky, since many children and babies died after the war because nobody was around to take care of them. Ben is very kind and has a good relationship with Todd, but Todd and Cillian are very antagonistic towards one another.

Todd goes to see Ben, who's upset about what Aaron did to Todd in the swamp. Todd says it isn't important, and then explains about the silence in the Noise. Both Ben and Cillian are worried when he shares his thoughts with them, telling him that he has to run.

Analysis

Chapter 1

One of the first details that is established at the start of the story is the concept of the Noise. The Noise is something that's present throughout the story and helps to move the plot at various points.

The primitive nature of Prentisstown is established at the start of the book as well. Todd stresses how important it is that he becomes a man, a character trait that lasts through the majority of the book, and frequently gets Todd into trouble.

Aaron is introduced as well, already acting as a primary rival towards Todd. His antagonistic nature also goes to show the reader how commonplace violence is on this strange new planet. Todd expands on this when he thinks about the Spackle, the race that was originally native to the new world. Todd paints them out to be an antagonistic race, but he later learns that these are just lies spread by Prentisstown.

Todd also discovers the Silence towards the end of the chapter. This is one of the driving plot points, and the inciting incident for the story. The theme of Violence is introduced with Todd's encounter with Aaron, who beats Todd for having negative thoughts.

Chapter 2

The nature of the Noise is expanded upon. Because of the Noise, it's incredibly difficult for anyone in Prentisstown to have privacy from one another. This has shaped the way that Todd was raised, since he essentially was never allowed to have a private thought.

This is again expanded upon towards the middle and end of the book once Todd learns more about the nature of the planet and the Noise.

The negative nature of Prentisstown is introduced in this chapter. Todd discusses how everyone seems to be focusing on violent thoughts, or remembering what they lost in



the war. Even the ones that aren't outright violent seem to struggle with severe depression.

The Mayor is briefly introduced. He's one of the driving forces throughout the course of the book, although he only makes a few appearances, most notably towards the end of the book. His goals and methods of control are expounded on by other characters throughout the story.

The theme of Solidarity is introduced. In this depiction of solidarity, it is not shown to be a good thing, as no one in the town has a private thought, ever. Everything is known to every other living creature. Thus, the author suggests that, in this instance, solidarity is not always a good thing and can lead to a lowered quality of living. In other words, in some circumstances, individuality is rather to be valued over the group.

Chapter 3

Ben and Cillian are introduced for the first time. Although these characters are only briefly introduced, the reader is given a clear indication of what kind of relationship they have with Todd, which is that Todd gets along with Ben but does not get along as well with Cillian.

The plot begins with Ben and Cillian equipping Todd for his trip, telling him that he has to run. They hint that there is more going on in the world, something that becomes readily apparent as Todd begins his journey.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Solidarity as it is introduced in Chapter 2.

Discussion Question 2

What has happened to the humans on this planet?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the "Noise" and the ramifications of never having a private thought.

Vocabulary

forsaken, jabber, clamor, churns, detrimental, despair, paddocks



Chapters 4-7

Summary

Chapter 4

Ben and Cillian start running about the house, packing different things for Todd. They go into their prayer room and pull up the boards, taking a backpack they have had prepared. Todd is surprised to see it has a journal in it, since all the books were supposed to have been destroyed. The sheriff, Davis Prentiss Jr., shows up demanding to see Todd. Cillian holds him off and even ends up attacking and disarming Davis.

While this is happening, Todd tries to get answers from Ben, who isn't giving him any information, since there's no time. Once Davis is dealt with, Ben and Cillian tell Todd that he has to run off into the swamp for his own safety. What is evident is that both Ben and Cillian have been waiting and planning for this day to come all along. The big question that Todd has, of course, is "why."

Chapter 5

Ben takes Todd to the edge of the swamp and explains that he has to run. The book in the bag is a journal written by Todd's mother, and Ben includes a map that will take him to another part of the world. Todd is surprised, as he had always been told there was nothing but Prentisstown. Ben seems unsure, but his Noise indicates he's trying to believe and have faith.

Todd keeps asking why he has to go, but Ben says it would be too dangerous to tell him everything, since everyone would be able to read it from his Noise. They were hoping it wouldn't come to this, but there's no other choice. The conversation is interrupted by loud bangs coming from the farm. Ben gives Todd his hunting knife. Todd wants to go and defend the farm, but Ben makes him promise that he'll run, and Todd eventually relents and agrees.

Chapter 6

Todd rushes off into the swamp, but thinks about quickly turning back. He doesn't want to abandon Cillian and Ben on the farm. Manchee reminds Todd that he promised, so Todd reluctantly keeps going. They get attacked by crocs, but Todd manages to fend them off with his new knife.

Aaron arrives and attacks Todd. He reveals that he was helping to spread Todd's thoughts about the silence. He wants to bring Todd back to the farm, screaming at Todd that whatever is out there belongs to him. Todd manages to escape when more crocs arrive and go after Aaron. He and Manchee rush through the swamp, past buildings that belonged to the Spackle. Todd senses the silence again, believing it to be Spackle. He's



ready to kill it, but he stops when he realizes that it isn't a Spackle generating the "silence," but a girl.

Chapter 7

Todd is beyond surprised to see a girl in the swamps. He had only seen them in some of the memories of the other men and the videos, but none of them looked like her. He tries to communicate with her, but she doesn't seem to understand him. She strikes him in the head with a stick, causing him to lash out with the knife. He cuts her, which causes her to stop her attack. Todd uses his medical kit to treat her wounds, trying to explain he doesn't want to hurt her and to ask who she is. If she understands, she doesn't let on. The pair is interrupted by Aaron rushing through the swamp, trying to reach them.

Analysis

Chapter 4

One of the themes is very briefly touched upon when Todd mentions how education is handled in Prentisstown. The Mayor is aware that education is important, which is why he has outlawed it. The reader also learns that all of the existing books have been destroyed, further suggesting that the leaders in Prentisstown don't want the people in the town to be educated, thus making them easier to control. The theme of Education, then, suggests that gaining an education is a buffer or impediment to tyranny.

Prentiss Jr. shows up for the first time. As brief as his introduction is, his character is firmly established as a sadistic and antagonistic force that wants to bring Todd in. Jr. showing up is what ultimately forces Todd to run, giving Ben and Cillian no time to explain exactly what Todd is running from.

Chapter 5

The theme of Never Giving Up is introduced for the first time. This is something that Ben practically embodies, and he later outright tells Todd that he has to be hopeful. Even at this early stage, that hope helps to motivate Todd as he travels through the swamp. Ben also gives Todd his hunting knife, which Todd frequently uses throughout the book to survive. The knife is especially critical in the later parts of the book when Todd and Viola are fighting against Aaron. The knife not only symbolizes Ben and his love for Todd, but it is also representative of the need to always keep going, even when things are difficult. This also underscores and gives meaning to the title, *The Knife of Never Letting Go*.

Chapter 6

Todd discovers Viola, the other protagonist of the book. For Todd, this is especially surprising because Todd was under the belief that there were no women left alive. He thinks that when the Spackle infected Prentisstown with the Noise, all of the women died. This is the first taste of the world that Todd is getting outside of Prentisstown, and



he's beginning to quickly come to the conclusion that he's not been told the truth about many things. This is confusing to him since the Noise doesn't allow anyone to hide their thoughts, or so he thought.

Aaron continues to pursue Todd, and at this point in the story he seems sadistically pointed toward capturing and angering Todd. Aaron wants Todd to know that Ben and Cillian are under attack, and likely dead, hoping that Todd will return to the farm. Todd never gets the opportunity to turn back and confront Aaron because of the crocs, but it's clear that he's willing to fight against Aaron, and at this point Todd believes he could even kill him.

Chapter 7

The girl is a shocking revelation to Todd and further confuses him as he begins to understand that no one has been telling the truth about the world they live in. The confrontation with the girl, and his frustration at not being able to connect with her or speak with her, leaves him confused and frightened. When she attacks him, he defends himself, but he doesn't want to hurt her. In fact, quite the opposite. He's quick to treat her injuries after he cuts her with his knife, which ultimately helps the girl learn that she can trust Todd.

Discussion Question 1

What are the drawbacks to the Noise?

Discussion Question 2

What suggests that Cillian and Ben have been planning Todd's exile for a while?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the significance of Ben giving Todd his knife.

Vocabulary

serrated, muck, thrashing, recombinant, fluctuations, mutation, flourishing, palpable



Chapters 8-11

Summary

Chapter 8

Aaron attacks Todd once again. He says that he wants "the sign," which Todd assumes is the girl. She runs off, causing Aaron to release Todd and chase after her. Todd goes after Aaron, but he's already captured the girl. Todd tries to fight him once again, but Aaron overpowers him and pushes him into the river. Todd is able to grab a rock and strike Aaron several times. While Aaron is dazed and bleeding by the side of the river, Todd frees the girl and debates whether or not he should kill Aaron. He decides against it, calling himself a coward for showing Aaron mercy.

Chapter 9

Todd and the girl go deeper into the swamp and set up camp. Todd keeps trying to communicate with her, but she doesn't respond to anything he says. While he's reading the map, she wanders off and starts to explore the swamp. She brings Todd over to the crashed remains of a ship. She takes him to another crashed ship, where Todd finds two bodies, a male and a female. Todd guesses that they must have been her parents, making him wonder where she came from.

Chapter 10

The girl goes into the ship and packs her supplies. She uses an item to create a campfire and shares some of her food with Todd. Todd keeps trying to communicate with her, but she doesn't respond. They travel through the swamp, Todd using the map that was in the journal to guide them towards the mountains. Todd spends more time thinking about her. He realizes that if she doesn't have any Noise she must have come from somewhere else, somewhere where there wasn't the Noise germ. He worries that she's going to get infected and die. He then starts to wonder if she's capable of hearing his Noise, even though she doesn't have one of her own.

Chapter 11

The girl starts to panic, indeed able to hear what Todd is thinking. Todd tries to comfort her, but she's still not responding to anything he says. He tries to rationalize with her, having no idea whether or not she's even able to get the germ, since it could be localized to Prentisstown. He gets frustrated when she doesn't respond and starts to leave. He can hear Noise in the distance, and using the girl's binoculars he's able to see the Mayor and several other townsfolk riding into the swamp on horseback, coming after them.



Analysis

Chapter 8

Aaron mentions "the sign" when he attacks Todd. At first, Todd believes that the sign is the girl. This is because Todd hasn't experienced the rest of the world, so he thinks the girl is unique and the only female on the planet. This is further supported by Aaron going after her.

Todd is able to defeat Aaron, but he can't bring himself to kill him. This is a reoccurring trait for Todd throughout the majority of the book. Todd believes that he's a coward because he isn't able to take a life, reflecting on the brutal upbringing and the general violent nature that comes from being raised in Prentisstown. The theme of Violence is demonstrated through this crossroads for Todd, and shows that Violence can happen all around someone, but in the end, it still boils down to the choice to allow it to change who you are on the inside. Todd constantly chastises himself for being weak and unable to take a life, but it is this lack of action on his part that defines him and shows that the violence around him has not altered who he is, fundamentally, as a person.

Chapter 9

Todd continues to try and fail to communicate with the girl, which continues to frustrate him. Despite her reluctance to communicate, it appears that the two of them are going to be traveling companions. The girl leads Todd to the remains of her crashed ship. Todd also discovers the fate of the girl's parents. The symbol of the ship will become clearer in future chapters, but it is evident in this chapter that it has been significant in preserving the girl's life, and that she has had to endure much by continuing to live in the ship with her parents' bodies.

Chapter 10

Todd is beginning to discover that everything he was taught in Prentisstown might not necessarily be true. He starts to think about more of the world around him, contemplating whether or not the girl is able to read his Noise. He soon learns that she is able to read his Noise, even though she doesn't give off any Noise herself. Todd also shows his concern for the girl, worrying that he might end up infecting the girl if she spends any more time with him.

His care and concern for her is evident in his worry about her becoming infected. He already feels protective of her, but is also confused by the silence that emanates from her. She isn't supposed to exist, and her ability to have silence is also supposed to be a myth. This sets up a line of questioning that eventually lays the foundation for him to continue to ask and answer his own questions about life on the planet and the information he's been told over the years.

Chapter 11



The girl starts to panic, showing that she is indeed capable of reading Todd's Noise, though he can't hear her's. She's afraid that she's become infected with the Noise virus. As far as she knows, the virus is lethal towards women, since Todd hasn't learned that Prentisstown was lying about that. Todd grows upset with her continual silence, deciding that he's just going to leave her behind. Todd changes his mind when he can see that Prentisstown is marching out in force.

Discussion Question 1

If the girl has been able to hear his Noise all along, why do you think she has stayed silent?

Discussion Question 2

Describe the theme of Violence in Chapter 8.

Discussion Question 3

Why does Todd feel badly that he can't kill Aaron?

Vocabulary

gashes, ferocious, gurgles, clamber, gouged, glinting, canopy, tromp, nipped



Chapters 12-18

Summary

Chapter 12

Todd runs back to the girl and communicates with his Noise about the oncoming men. When he takes a closer look through the binoculars he sees that Aaron is with them. Todd is angry with himself, thinking he was too weak and it's his fault that Aaron is still alive. Todd gets the girl to run and they manage to find a well-built bridge. Todd tries to cut the bridge with his knife to destroy it after they pass. The ropes on the bridge are coated with some kind of resin he can't cut through. Todd becomes overwhelmed with anger and starts to hit himself. The girl is scared, but she manages to get by her fear and uses her campfire box to blow up the bridge, stopping Mayor Prentiss and his men from crossing. The Mayor threatens them, but they just run away. The chapter ends with the girl finally speaking, identifying herself as Viola.

Chapter 13

Todd and Viola start to talk. She explains that she and her family were flying over the swamp when a fire caused them to crash. Aaron found her and started to chase her throughout the swamp. Every time she escaped, he eventually found her again. Todd explains that his people are settlers from another planet. When they arrived, the Spackle refused their offers for peace and they fought for years. They used biological weapons, one which made the animals able to communicate, and one which caused the Noise. Todd implies all of the Spackle were wiped out, but doesn't go into more detail. Viola expresses how strange the Noise is to her, and how she isn't always able to hear it. The chapter ends with someone cocking a rifle at them, angrily asking why they burned the bridge down.

Chapter 14

Todd mistakes the person holding the rifle as being a man, but soon he realizes that the gun's owner is in fact an older woman. She's able to read his Noise and figures out what has happened. She relaxes when Viola explains that Todd saved her life. The woman identifies herself as Mathilde, but prefers to go by Hildy. She questions the two for a moment and decides they're trustworthy. She offers them the chance to stay at her farm before taking them to someplace she just refers to as the Settlement.

Viola is eager to accept, but Todd is hesitant, fearing that the Mayor and his men will find some other way to cross the water. He's also afraid that he'll infect Viola if he stays around her. Hildy has no idea if that's the case, but recommends he keeps some distance. Todd is having a hard time adjusting to the silence of being around these two women. Viola decides to go with Hildy, but Todd falters, feeling lost and overwhelmed.



He snaps back to reality when he can hear the faint sound of someone's Noise greeting him.

Chapter 15

Todd goes to catch up and runs into an older man, Tam, the source of the Noise. Tam is Hildy's husband, and just as friendly towards the pair. Todd asks about the germ, and Tam assures Todd that women are immune. Todd is flabbergasted and tries to argue that's not the case, since all the women in his town died of it. Hildy says that Prentisstown is a sad case, but doesn't go into much more detail. When they arrive at the farm Todd can see that it's made out of metal, the old remains of a ship. Viola and Hildy talk about ships for a moment, and Todd soon realizes that Viola is a new settler. He confronts her about this and she admits that it's the truth. She was part of a scouting expedition and there are thousands more settlers getting ready to land on the planet.

Chapter 16

Viola tells Todd that all of the ships are still several months out. Todd asks why they're coming to the new planet at all. Tam chimes in that the old planet was falling apart years ago when the original settlers left, so it must be getting even worse now. Viola doesn't go into too much more detail, clearly missing her parents. Todd doesn't pick up on that because of the lack of Noise. Viola snaps at him that she has feelings, even if she doesn't project them like everyone else. The two argue with one another, despite Hildy trying to get them to apologize.

Later in the evening, Viola tries to ask about Todd's journal, but he's still upset and doesn't want to talk to her. In the morning, Hildy says she'll take Todd and Viola to the settlement, known as Farbranch. When they arrive, Todd is surprised to see both men and women living there. Hildy explains that it's different than New Elizabeth, which she clarifies is what Prentisstown used to be called. Todd is amazed that the Noise is so peaceful and upbeat, quite different from what he's used to. The villagers can hear from his Noise that he's from Prentisstown. One man, Matthew, angrily approaches them, declaring that anyone from Prentisstown isn't welcome.

Chapter 17

Hildy tries to calm Matthew down, but he's full of rage. Todd can hear his Noise, and discovers that he was from Prentisstown, but he too refers to it as New Elizabeth. Todd becomes protective of Viola, surprising everyone, including himself, by drawing his knife. Hildy manages to calm both of them down, and Matthew's anger dissipates, replaced with sadness. Todd can sense that something terrible happened in the past, but he doesn't know what.

Hildy takes them through the town and talks about some of the other settlements, noting that the largest one is a place many miles away called Haven. Todd is amazed that other places exist in the world. Not only that, but he starts to see children amongst the settlers of Farbranch. Hildy brings them to her sister's house, Francia, who is the deputy



mayor. She asks what trouble Hildy brought, saying that there's an army following Todd and Viola.

Chapter 18

Hildy convinces Francia that there's no army, and it was just a few men on horseback. She's hesitant, but eventually agrees to let Todd and Viola stay the night. Viola asks if there's any way that she can get in touch with her ships, but Francia says they don't have any communication. She says that the original settlers were faithful and wanted to escape the old world to start a new utopia, so they didn't bother with means to communicate back to the old world. This seems to hurt Viola, and Francia tries to comfort her.

Todd is sent to work in the barn with another worker, named Ivan. They want to keep Todd out of sight until they can have a town meeting to talk about his arrival, as well as the news that there are new settlers coming in. Ivan works Todd hard, but when they have lunch he shows a much softer side. Hildy eventually comes and tells Todd to return to Francia's for food while they attend their meeting. He's getting ready to go back to her house, but he's stopped by Matthew.

Analysis

Chapter 12

Todd continues to blame himself for being unable to kill Aaron. He feels like he isn't worthy of being a man, because to him a man is someone that's able to kill. Todd returns for Viola and the two of them are able to discover a bridge, their first signs that there are other settlements on the planet. The bridge represents hope and a testament to the human will to survive despite the odds. This gives a nod to the theme of Never Giving Up.

Viola shows her cleverness by using her campfire device to destroy the bridge. Todd believes the army will be delayed a few days while they find a new way to cross, but it ends up being a temporary solution as he learns in later chapters. Viola finally shows that she's willing to trust Todd, speaking for the first time and identifying herself by name.

Chapter 13

Todd and Viola begin to speak about their respective histories. Todd says that the Spackle fought the settlers when his people first arrived on the planet. They didn't have as many traditional weapons, but they had biological weapons which infected everyone on the planet with the Noise germ. This is also how animals were able to communicate with everyone else.

Viola hints that she was a settler, but she doesn't go into much more detail about it, simply saying that she was in a ship that crashed in the swamp. The chapter ends with



Hildy being introduced, which leads to Todd and Viola discovering even more about the planet and what really happened in the past.

Chapter 14

Todd's protective side is shown again when he considers that he might infect Viola, or that the army will come after Hildy if they know that she's protecting them. This is a trait that Todd and later Viola frequently show whenever they encounter anyone, in no small part because of what ends up happening to Hildy and the rest of the inhabitants of Farbranch.

Todd's world is shattered again when he meets another woman. He was able to partially justify the existence of Viola since it was clear that she came from another planet, but according to the men of Prentisstown there shouldn't be any native women left, but Hildy clearly proves that to be false.

Chapter 15

Todd is told that women are immune to the virus. He has a hard time believing this, since he was raised under the belief that the Noise virus was lethal to all women. Hildy indicates what the reader is already thinking, that things clearly aren't what they seem in Prentisstown. Hildy doesn't go into much more detail, but more is revealed over the next few chapters as Todd gets the chance to experience life in a new settlement.

Viola reveals that there are more settlers coming to the planet. She was just part of a scouting expedition to make sure that the planet is safe. Todd is apprehensive about this since he still doesn't know what kind of affect the Noise virus will have on any new settlers. The fact that something is amiss in regards to the women on the planet begins to suggest some sort of prejudicial treatment of women in Prentisstown, or that perhaps all of the women were killed because they didn't have the Noise like the men did. The theme of Gender Inequity is beginning to be suggested, though at this point in the story, it isn't completely revealed yet.

Chapter 16

A few details are given about what life was like on the old planet. This isn't something that has really been explored before and doesn't get too much detail in any of the later chapters. Characters occasionally seem to make reference to the old world falling apart, a fact that Tam reinforces. Tam also makes it clear that it wasn't just the Prentisstown men that fought in the war, since he has war experience against the Spackle.

Todd's stubbornness is shown when he fights with Viola. Viola eventually realizes that it is pointless for them to fight and she tries to reach out and apologize, but he rejects her apology. Matthew is introduced at the end of the chapter, and just further serves to show how unwelcome anyone from Prentisstown is in the rest of the world.

Chapter 17



New Elizabeth is mentioned for the first time. As time goes on, Todd discovers the significance of the name change, and learns that the name was changed to Prentisstown after Prentiss's bloody coup. Todd shows off his protective nature again when he leaps to Viola's defense. Even he's surprised that he was willing to draw his knife in defense of her. Matthew continues to hint at the darker past of Prentisstown, but he doesn't go into any more detail. The fact that the town's name was changed from a feminine name to a male's name is also alluding to the Gender Equality theme.

Todd discovers that life has been continuing on the planet for some time when he sees children. This is the first time that he has ever seen a child, since he was always the youngest in Prentisstown. Todd learns about Haven for the first time.

Chapter 18

Francia continues to show that there's a prejudice against anyone from Prentisstown. She doesn't trust Todd, and she's clearly concerned about the force that's coming from Prentisstown. She explains to Viola that the technology is relatively lacking on the planet, since the settlers wanted to escape from their past. Viola is saddened and worried by the news, since she now has no way of getting in touch with her people.

Todd briefly brings up the theme of gender equity with what little he sees of Farbranch. He notices that women are treated as the superior gender. They seem to be in all of the ruling positions while the men hold more labor intensive positions. Farbranch isn't as extreme as the other towns, but it's still clear there's at least some dissonance between the genders.

Discussion Question 1

If women are immune to the germ, and it doesn't kill them as Todd was told, then what may have truly happened to all of the women in Prentisstown?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the new theme of Gender Equity.

Discussion Question 3

What does Viola learn in Farbranch about their lack of technology and why does it make her sad?



Vocabulary

resin, obliterate crevice, mutton, flinches, synthetic, juncture bounty, unnerving, clarity, quarantined, vexed humble abusive ransack, clenched, rowdiest, subside, hoisting posse, bickering, utopia, strife, chafing, dignity



Chapters 19-25

Summary

Chapter 19

Matthew attacks Todd, saying that he's doing it because of Jessica. Todd senses something in his Noise, which he immediately says is a lie, although the reader doesn't know what he's referring to. Manchee tries to hold off Matthew, but he gets cut and loses part of his tail. Todd is able to lure Matthew into a trap in the bar, cutting several barrels free to collapse on top of Matthew. Francia comes running back, telling Todd to hide with Viola. Prentisstown is attacking in force. Viola and Todd decide to flee towards Haven, not wanting to put the town in any more danger. As they get to the top of the hill, they see that all of Prentisstown has marched out, easily outnumbering the smaller town of Farbranch.

Chapter 20

Todd uses Viola's binoculars to watch the battle. He's surprised to see so many people fighting in the army, since not everyone in Prentisstown was violent. He wonders if the Mayor has some hold over them. He tries to find Cillian or Ben, but there are no signs of them. Viola finally gets him to run, and they start traveling in the direction of Haven. They agree they shouldn't go to any other settlements because they don't want to bring the wrath of Prentisstown down on them.

Chapter 21

Todd and Viola continue to run. They eventually stop to rest and Viola asks to see Todd's journal. Todd reluctantly hands it to her. Viola reads the note, which says that Todd was supposed to go to Farbranch and warn them that Prentisstown was getting ready to march. The people in the town have just been waiting for Todd to become of age, so everyone in the town would be men. The journal doesn't say why.

The next few days they travel along the road, trying to avoid any other settlement they come across because they don't want to bring the wrath of Prentisstown down on anyone else. Todd and Viola start to argue about education. Viola wants to help Todd and the others on the planet learn, but Todd thinks an education isn't important. The conversation is cut short when Manchee warns them that someone is coming.

Chapter 22

The Noise turns out to be a herd of giant beasts. Todd and Viola run into a traveler, Wilf, who offers to take them through the herd on his cart. Viola lies about their names and uses an accent from Farbranch. Todd is overwhelmed, since he's never been able to lie before, or been around anyone who was capable of lying thanks to the Noise. The large creatures are making enough Noise where Todd doesn't have to worry about his



thoughts being read. Todd and Viola briefly talk about Aaron. Viola is surprised how much darker Aaron's preaching was compared to the preaching she heard back on her ship.

Wilf asks them about rumors he's heard of the Prentisstown army. He says he heard they've been marching and growing larger with each settlement they take. Viola tries to convince Wilf to warn his settlement, Brockley Falls, but he insists nobody listens to him, and doesn't seem to think they're in any danger. Wilf takes them to Brockley Falls. Neither Todd nor Viola want to stay long and bring the army towards the town. Viola realizes they're running low on supplies, but Todd assures her that he can teach her how to hunt. Manchee alerts them when he hears the sound of horses.

Chapter 23

The rider turns out to be none other than the Mayor's son, Prentiss Jr. Jr. is gleefully surprised to have found Todd, not expecting him to just be traveling on the road. Todd and Viola try to run, but Jr. is able to chase them down on his horse. Todd insists that Viola get away without him. He manages to get a sneak attack off on Jr. momentarily disarming him and pinning him to the ground. Todd threatens Jr. with his knife, but Jr. just starts taunting him, knowing that Todd won't kill him. He insults Viola, insisting they don't care about her, they just want Todd. He talks about how he killed Ben and Cillian, which causes Todd to snap. Todd still hesitates before the killing blow, giving Jr. an opportunity to escape and counterattack. He knocks Todd down and takes his knife, threatening to show him how to really use it.

Chapter 24

Jr. continues to taunt Todd, but before he gets the chance to take Todd away, Viola returns and uses her dismantled communication device to shock Jr. Todd reclaims his knife and gets ready to kill Jr. but Viola talks him out of it, insisting that he's not a killer. Todd is angry, especially because he thinks Jr. killed Cillian and Ben. Viola convinces him that he might have been lying about that and she eventually gets him to leave. Todd is still upset because he feels like a coward, and he wonders how different things would have been if he were braver. Todd and Viola continue to travel, barely talking to one another. They stumble into a campsite and Todd immediately pulls his knife when he realizes the person there is not a man, but a Spackle.

Chapter 25

Todd immediately goes to attack the Spackle. He quickly overpowers the Spackle, surprised to find that it's weaker than him. Viola pleads with him to stop, but Todd isn't listening. He sees the Spackle trying to go for his spear, so Todd stabs it in the chest, killing the Spackle. Todd argues with Viola that he had to do it, that the Spackle are the enemy and they killed his mother. Viola snaps, pointing out how many times he has been wrong and tricked by people in Prentisstown. According to them, all the women and the Spackle are dead, but that clearly isn't the case. Todd suddenly feels horrible for what he did, reflecting on how terrified the Spackle seemed. He drops the knife and



completely shuts down. He's forced into reality when Aaron suddenly arrives, grabbing Viola and knocking Todd down with his staff. He takes Todd's knife and gets ready to stab him.

Analysis

Chapter 19

It's never made clear exactly what Todd senses in Matthew's noise. By the end of the book, readers can assume that Matthew was likely blaming Prentisstown for the death of Jessica as well as the rest of the women that used to live there.

Todd discovers just how severe the attack is on Farbranch when he gets a chance to view the army. The army continues to march throughout the rest of the book, taking over each settlement they come across and adding more soldiers to their ranks with each conquest. Todd and Viola decide that their best course of action is to make it to the town of Haven, believing that Haven will be able to protect them from the growing Prentisstown army.

Chapter 20

Todd receives confirmation that Ben and Cillian aren't alive, since they weren't with the rest of the Prentisstown army. Todd theorizes that the Mayor has some sort of hold on the Prentisstown army, and this is something that Todd himself starts to show signs of throughout parts of the book when his Noise grows in intensity.

The theme of Violence is explored in this chapter as Todd and Viola watch in horror as Farbranch is attacked by Prentisstown. Todd feels ashamed that they ran instead of staying and trying to help the people of the Settlement protect their home.

Chapter 21

Todd and Viola show their compassion by avoiding other settlements. They want to protect those towns from suffering the same fate that befell Farbranch. This also shows that they feel guilty about all the people that were lost, something that persists throughout the rest of the book. Todd feels even worse when he discovers that the journal had contained a warning to Farbranch. If he hadn't been so stubborn before, Viola would have picked up on the warning when she asked Todd if she should read his journal for him. Todd can't read.

The theme of Education is brought up when Todd and Viola argue. Todd was raised thinking that education isn't important, so he's very dismissive towards it. Viola argues that it's a necessary skill, and as the book progresses Todd comes to realize that Viola is right. A prime example of this is his unwillingness to allow her to read it, an act that would have saved Farbranch from total annihilation.

Chapter 22



Todd is shocked when Viola is able to lie to Wilf. Todd has never been able to lie before because his Noise would always betray what he was really thinking. He has a hard time wrapping his head around Viola being able to lie, and she has to actually explain the concept to him. This helps to show why the Prentisstown men were able to rebel. Many of them were driven mad or just became angry because of the silence that came from the women. They disliked the fact that the women were able to read their minds, but they had no possible idea what the women were thinking, or if they could be trusted.

Todd and Viola continue to worry about the fate of the other settlements. They want to avoid going in to them to keep the towns safe. They try to convince Wilf about the dangers of the marching Prentisstown army, but nobody seems that concerned about it.

Chapter 23

Prentiss Jr. shows off more of his sadistic side when he corners Todd and Viola. He also shows the sexist views that most of the Prentisstown men seem to have. He insults Viola and implies that she's impure simply because of the fact that she's a girl. Viola ends up getting her revenge when she's the one to disable Jr. She has to sacrifice her communication device, however, in order to do it. This is important since it was just made clear how much she wants to get in touch with the other ships. She was willing to risk losing that chance in order to save Todd. The significance of the communicator is that it was also one of the only things she has left that reminds her of her home planet and of her parents.

Chapter 24

Todd is ready to kill Jr., but Viola is there to stop him. Todd feels like a coward once again for sparing a life. He's especially angry because he's just learned that Jr. was responsible for the deaths of Ben and Cillian. Viola is able to talk him down by pointing out that Jr. could have been lying. This ends up being partially true, since Jr. was only responsible for killing Cillian, not Ben. This manages to convince Todd, in no small part because he had just learned how effective lying was from Viola's earlier actions with Wilf. Todd is still clearly on edge, as shown by the fact that he immediately draws his weapon when they stumble into the Spackle camp.

Chapter 25

Todd instinctively lashes out against the Spackle. He can feel that the Spackle is weaker than him, and doesn't even seem to want to fight back. Despite that, Todd ends up killing the Spackle. It's implied that he's still angry and upset about everyone that he's spared. Not being able to kill made him feel like he was less of a man. Viola immediately argues with him, but Todd just counters with his anger. He says that the Spackle were responsible for his mom dying, and for everyone getting infected. Viola finally snaps and tells Todd that he's being foolish, and he needs to accept that after everything they've seen and heard, it's clear that the people in Prentisstown are lying about what really happened.



This seems to finally get through to Todd, and he's horrified by what he's done. He collapses on the ground as he tries to accept the reality of what has happened. This action is something that sticks with Todd throughout the rest of the book. If Viola wasn't there to point out what he had done was wrong, he likely would have succumbed to Aaron's plan and become part of the Prentisstown army. It is clear that in many respects, Viola is Todd's foil, often seeing things more clearly than he.

Discussion Question 1

Compare the characters of Viola and Todd. What traits do they share? How do they differ?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Violence in these chapters.

Discussion Question 3

Why does Todd regret killing the Spackle?

Vocabulary

glint, quarrel teetering wading, fertile, groggy, subsidence, seethe unraveling, hoisting, tentative wielding spasm, terrain lichen, keening



Chapters 26-31

Summary

Chapter 26

Todd's thoughts are a jumble. He eventually manages to bring things into focus and realizes that he has been stabbed in the back. Manchee is trying to get him to wake up. The knife had been partially stopped by the journal in his pack, keeping the blade from going all the way in and landing a killing blow. Viola and Aaron are gone. Todd wonders how Aaron was even able to get to them if he wasn't on horseback, or what he was doing so far away from the army in the first place. Todd uses Viola's supplies to treat his injuries. He's still upset about what he did to the Spackle and doesn't have any idea what to do. He's determined to get Viola back. Manchee says he can pick up her scent, leading Todd in that direction.

Chapter 27

Todd and Manchee start to pursue Viola. Todd is surprised to find that Aaron is taking the same path that they were, the one that was supposed to lead to Haven. Todd travels for days. He tries to get into a camp to steal food, but his Noise gives him away. He wants to hunt, but he's too haunted by his memories of killing the Spackle to use his knife. To make matters worse, Todd is starting to get sick. Todd finally collapses in a ditch along the side of the road. He's about to succumb to hunger and sickness, but Wilf happens to be crossing by and hears his Noise.

Chapter 28

Wilf brings Todd back onto his cart. He and his wife, Jane, start to take care of Todd. They make him a poultice for his fever and give him some food. Wilf explains that the Prentisstown army has been marching across the settlements, their numbers growing with each settlement that they take. Todd tries to tell Wilf that he lied before, but Wilf says he knew and doesn't care. They bring Todd to their caravan and help nurse him back to health. The rest of the settlers find out that he's from Prentisstown, but Wilf insists that he's from Farbranch and just troubled from what happened there. Todd is healthy enough to get going, once again determined to find Viola.

Chapter 29

Todd continues on his journey to find Viola, but despite the care he received, his fever is still getting worse. Todd frequently hallucinates. Sometimes he imagines himself killing the Spackle again, while other times he imagines that he's seeing Aaron, who keeps calling him a coward, saying that Todd will never be able to kill him and save Viola. He even sometimes sees himself trying to stab Aaron, only to kill a hallucination of Viola. After a couple more days of travel, Todd and Manchee finally stumble upon a small camp where Aaron is holding Viola.



Chapter 30

Todd knows that he can't rush into the ruined settlement where Aaron is camping. He tries to formulate a plan, but he keeps hallucinating another version of himself that tries to shoot down every idea he has, constantly calling him a failure. Todd finally comes up with a plan. He's able to make a fire using the skills Ben taught him. He gives a torch to Manchee, telling him to start running while he goes down the river on a makeshift boat.

Chapter 31

Todd's plan is for Manchee to set a fire further away from Aaron, then to start luring Aaron over by running around the campsite, using his Noise to shout for Todd. He'll hope that Aaron will think the fire is Todd's campsite and that Manchee is calling to Todd because he found Aaron. Meanwhile, Todd will approach from the river, far enough back so Aaron won't hear his Noise. The plan works and Todd manages to get to Viola, who is drugged but still alive. He starts to bring her to the boat when Manchee comes in, followed by Aaron chasing after him. Todd gets Viola into the boat, but before he can get in Aaron grabs him. Manchee bravely tackles Aaron, letting Todd get in the boat. Manchee is caught by Aaron before he can get on, and Aaron forces Todd to choose between giving up on Manchee or giving up on Viola. Todd heartbreakingly pushes the boat down the river, hearing a loud crack and becoming filled with despair as Aaron finishes off Manchee.

Analysis

Chapter 26

Todd believes that the journal is what saved him from being killed. While it does reduce the damage he received from the stab, Todd eventually figures out that Aaron purposefully left him alive. Another clue that Todd learns is the fact that Aaron is traveling alone and away from the rest of the army.

Chapter 27

Todd is given another clue that things aren't what they seem when he notices that Aaron is taking the same path that they were, the one that leads to Haven. Todd is still feeling guilty about murdering the innocent Spackle. He's unable to bring himself to kill anything else, not even animals, and not even in the face of his starvation. This underscores the theme of Violence and its effects on a person's well-being. Perpetrating the violence or experiencing it, or even witnessing it, all impact the person involved.

Despite his weakened state, Todd refuses to give up, showing how determined he is, and also how much he cares about Viola. This demonstrates the theme of Never Giving Up, and is a theme that continues throughout the novel. This drives the two heroines through to the conclusion, even when it seems that most ordinary individuals would have stopped.



Chapter 28

Todd discovers the extent of the Prentisstown's army march. Things are looking grim for the settlements, and with each victory the army is growing in size. Todd tells Wilf that he and Viola were lying earlier. Wilf knew because of Todd's Noise, but he didn't care because he could also tell that Todd and Viola were just two innocent kids. It's not stated, but it's fair to assume that Wilf also sensed Todd's guilt over what happened in Farbranch and could tell that he wasn't trying to cause trouble like most of the Prentisstown men.

The theme of Solidarity is demonstrated in this scene and chapter through Wilf's interaction with Todd. Wilf knew that Todd was lying before, and he could have left him lying in the gutter when he drove along the road. However, he believes that Todd is a good person and that the Prentisstown army and its men should be avoided. Wilf isn't into confrontation, but he also seems to know that Todd might hold the key to stopping them.

Chapter 29

Todd continues to struggle with his past actions. He's clearly conflicted, feeling guilty for becoming a killer, but at the same time he also feels guilty because he didn't kill Aaron. He's obviously having a hard time figuring out what he's supposed to be doing. Part of him is motivated by Viola's earlier words, but he's still very much indoctrinated by the Prentisstown beliefs, which is why he still feels like a coward for previously sparing Aaron. This clearly indicates a belief in what makes a person a grown man. Todd believes that when he is able to take another man's life, then he will be a man. However, Todd's understanding of the world and his paradigms have been challenged and now he is beginning to see this rite of passage as barbaric and violent.

Chapter 30

Todd is finally starting to learn from Viola. He's willing to think before attacking; having learned that if he just rushes in and lets his emotions get the better of him things will go poorly. Todd's guilt starts to manifest in the form of a feverish dream. His hallucination shoots down everything that he proposes, clearly representing all of the self-doubt that Todd is feeling. Todd is able to work through that and come up with his own plan to rescue Viola.

This touches upon two themes. The first is the theme of Education, but the other theme is Never Giving Up. Todd is clearly feeling defeated, for taking the life of the Spackle and for failing to protect Viola, as well as failing to live up to his expectations of what it means to be a man. Despite that, Todd is willing to push forward and fight through his fever and hallucinations; trying to do everything he can to rescue Viola.

Chapter 31

Todd comes up with a clever plan to rescue Viola, but things don't go perfectly. Manchee is killed while saving Todd and Viola from Aaron. Todd is devastated by



Manchee's death, especially since he feels directly responsible for Manchee dying. This adds onto the doubt that Todd was feeling about sparing Aaron. Todd later realizes this is exactly what Aaron wanted. Aaron killed Manchee because he specifically knew that it would anger Todd. It is becoming clear that for whatever purpose, Aaron wants Todd to kill him.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Education in Chapter 30.

Discussion Question 2

Why does Wilf pick up Todd and rescue him?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Solidarity in Chapter 28.

Vocabulary

ebbs, tang, thicket, parcels, poultice, vouch, shimmer, rickety, decrepit, sloshing



Chapters 32-36

Summary

Chapter 32

Todd awakens five days later, resting in a bed. Viola explains that she was able to get the boat to a settlement known as Carbonel Downs. Dr. Snow has been treating Todd for the last five days, and Todd's finally gotten over his fever. Todd is still devastated over the loss of Manchee. He tries to convince the doctor that he and Viola need to leave because of the army. Dr. Snow insists that the town is well fortified and they know how to fight wars. Todd tries to argue, but Dr. Snow stubbornly resists. He leaves to go help his child, insisting that Todd at least stay long enough for the town elders to talk to him.

Chapter 33

Viola and Todd agree that they have to leave. Viola explains how far they traveled down the river, and they're now just roughly two days away from Haven. She says she saw other settlements on the river, but she was horrified by how poverty stricken they were. She dislikes Carbonel Downs because the men and women are separated, with the men clearly being the ruling gender. Nobody took her seriously when she tried to warn them about the army, and the elders only wanted to talk to Todd specifically because of his gender. Todd doesn't care what they say and he brings Viola with him as they go to find the elders. Viola apologizes for what happened to Manchee, saying she misses him too, but if Todd had stayed Aaron would have just killed them all anyway. As they're traveling through the settlement, Todd suddenly hears a familiar Noise which he believes to be coming from Ben.

Chapter 34

Todd is surprised to see Ben. The two hug and share their Noise, saying what happened to one another. Ben escaped the farm, but Cillian didn't survive the attack. He had been running ahead of the army since then, trying to find signs of Todd and Viola. Todd explains everything that happened, and the two share a moment to mourn their respective losses. Ben says he used to be in Haven 20 years ago. He has no idea if it will have what they need, but he's hopeful it will. Todd and Viola seem discouraged, but Ben gives them a speech about hope and how it's guided them this far. He says he can't go with them because Prentisstown men aren't tolerated. He says he wants to tell them more, but they're interrupted when armed men from the settlement approach.

Chapter 35

Dr. Snow and the other men arrive with weapons pointed at the group. They're upset to find out that Viola lied to them about where Todd really came from. They want to kill Ben for being from Prentisstown, stating that's the law. Dr. Snow tries to argue that it's



pointless, but the rest of the men are angry because scouts have reported the Prentisstown army is marching towards them. Todd threatens one of the men, trying to save Ben. They're interrupted by the forward advance of the Prentisstown army. Todd tells them the army will be well armed, causing the men to return to town so they can protect their families. Ben says it's too dangerous for him to go with them, but Todd convinces him otherwise, and Ben promises to at least go until he knows they're safe.

Chapter 36

Todd and the others escape from the town, which they soon hear coming under fire from the Prentisstown army. Once they get far enough away, Ben explains everything. He says the Spackle were innocent, that the Noise virus was always part of the planet. The women were naturally immune to it, which the men resented. They hated that the women could read their Noise, but they had no Noise of their own. Everyone tried to deal with it with different tactics, which naturally led to different settlements forming. New Elizabeth blamed the Spackle, which started the war.

After the Spackle were slaughtered, New Elizabeth residents turned on one another. The women were blamed and the men started to talk about rebelling against them. Ben and Cillian were opposed to the idea, and never thought anyone would take it seriously. The Mayor, Jessica Elizabeth, took it seriously and started sending citizens away. The men eventually struck and killed all the women. Cillian wanted to fight, but Ben told him not to because if they did, nobody would be there to raise Todd.

The town was renamed and Mayor Prentiss took over. Whenever a boy became a man he would tell them his own version of history and recruit them into his army. Ben equates him to a god. Todd was going to be the last innocent to fall, and then Prentiss was going to march with his converted army under his control. He wants to kill Todd because he sees Todd as a symbol of resistance to his divine word. If he can corrupt Todd, by making him kill another human being, then he will have succeeded. Todd is grateful for Viola's insistence that he refrain from killing Aaron.

The story is interrupted by the arrival of Prentiss Jr. Ben says he'll hold him off. Todd tries to argue, but Ben and Viola convince Todd that it's the right thing for him to do, and that they need to keep pressing on towards Haven.

Analysis

Chapter 32

Todd is starting to feel crushed by everything that has happened the last few days. His body has taken a beating, as well as his spirit. Losing Manchee continues to effect Todd until he's able to speak with Viola and Ben again. This is setting up for Ben's big speech about home, which directly addresses the theme of Never Giving Up.

Chapter 33



The theme of Gender Equity is directly brought up in the way that Carbonel Downs operates. Viola explains to Todd that nobody has been listening to her for the last five days just because of her gender. She's been trying to warn them that the Prentisstown army is marching upon the town and they need to get prepared, but nobody believes her. Todd also notices that they keep the men and women in separate areas. Todd also notices that they're playing music constantly throughout the town, making it harder for anyone to hear the Noise. Todd suspects the men and women might be separated because the men are paranoid about the women being able to read them. The music represents the lack of harmony in the town, and that they make their own external Noise using the music, so that their internal Noise isn't as noticeable. Metaphorically, the men are trying to create so much chaos around them that they don't allow themselves the chance to think deeply or consider their actions.

Todd shows that he doesn't care about their gender judgments. He insists that he's going to bring Viola with him. The most important discovery that Todd makes comes at the end of the chapter when he runs into Ben.

Chapter 34

Ben starts to take on the role of father for the short time that he and Todd are reunited. The strength of this relationship was hinted at earlier when the readers were first introduced to Ben, but in the next few chapters it really shines. Ben also reveals that he has previously spent time in Haven 20 years ago. He doesn't know if Haven will offer protection for the two, but he's hopeful that it will. Ben's character is constantly talking about hope, and his words are ultimately what help to inspire Todd and Viola to keep pressing forward, even in light of everything that they've seen and all the defeats they've had to suffer.

Chapter 35

Todd finally discovers what the "law" is that everyone has been talking about. It was first mentioned with Matthew, who argued that Todd and Viola shouldn't have been allowed in because of the "law." It turns out what he meant was that Todd was actually supposed to be killed, not simply denied entry into the town. In the following chapters Todd will discover exactly why this law was put into effect.

Todd shows his cleverness once again. He uses the skills that he's learned from Viola to trick the men of the settlement into letting them go. He's helped by Dr. Snow, who argues that Todd is too young to suffer for the sins of the men in Prentisstown.

Chapter 36

Todd discovers the truth about what happened with Prentisstown. The fall of Prentisstown shows several themes. Gender Equality is brought up again, with the men of Prentisstown lashing out and blaming the women because they didn't have the Noise. The importance of Education is brought up as well. Prentiss has kept his followers uneducated, purposely, so they wouldn't think to question his orders. He was able to make his own personal army simply because nobody knew how to think for themselves.



Todd is only just starting to learn that because of everything that he's seen on the travels as well as the lessons taught by Viola.

The theme of Never Giving Up is shown through Ben's actions, as well as Cillian's. Ben and Cillian felt like they failed when they let the men of Prentisstown slaughter the women. They tried to redeem themselves by raising Todd and keeping him from becoming part of the army. Ben also tries to redeem himself by offering to stay behind to hold off Jr. when he arrives on horseback, giving Todd and Viola the time they need to get closer to Haven.

Another theme is shown through the story, and that is Solidarity. Ben believes that the Mayor is pursuing Todd so hard because he sees Todd as being part of the army. If Todd fails to live up to the expectations and doesn't join, it means that the whole army has failed. Prentiss doesn't want Todd to become a symbol of resistance. If he can get Todd to fall and accept his place in the army, then it will be proof to everyone that what they are doing is divine guidance.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Never Giving Up.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Gender Equity in Chapter 38.

Discussion Question 3

Why is it so important to Aaron and Prentisstown that Todd kill another human being?

Vocabulary

thumping, grieving, escalated, clattering, reluctant, sanitary, ignorant, prosperity, paranoia, complicit, atone



Chapters 37-42

Summary

Chapter 37

Todd wants to give up after all the loss he's experienced. Viola points out that if Todd does that, it would make all the sacrifices that everyone has done for him worthless. She admits that she doesn't have any hope, but she doesn't want to give up either because that would mean that Mayor Prentiss will have won. Todd agrees and the two spend the next few days running, trying to scavenge what supplies they can. All the settlements they come across are abandoned. They assume that word of the army spread and everyone is fleeing to Haven. They stop at one abandoned caravan to have breakfast, and Todd asks Viola to read from his mother's journal, figuring this might be the last time he gets the chance.

Chapter 38

Viola starts reading the journal. Todd's mother writes about their early arrival on the planet, a time before the war with the Spackle. She promises that she will always be there for Todd, and how excited she is for him to meet Cillian and Ben once he grows up. She praises Prentiss for helping to organize the community, and she is so happy that Aaron has come by to bless Todd. Todd and Viola both have a hard time with these sections, knowing what would become of these men in the present.

Todd needs her to take a break. Viola appreciates this, since she's thinking about her own lost parents. Todd realizes that he's able to tell what she's thinking, even without her Noise. He knows that she misses her parents, just as much as he misses his mother. She's imagining her own parents being as hopeful as Todd's mother was, not knowing what fate awaited them.

Chapter 39

Todd and Viola keep traveling. They spot a large waterfall in the distance, which they assume marks Haven. They use Viola's binoculars to spot the town. It's the largest town that Todd has ever seen, and it's defensible enough where it could potentially hold off an army. Viola celebrates the fact that they were able to beat the Prentisstown army. She and Todd both become hopeful and keep moving towards Haven. With the binoculars, they're able to spot the army miles away, and they believe it'll take at least a day for them to catch up. Their hope falters when they spot a boat traveling along the river, close enough for them to see Aaron is guiding it.

Chapter 40

Todd and Viola run from Aaron, trying to use the trees as cover. Aaron fires a few shots from his boat, but he has to choose between firing or rowing. They use that to their



advantage, putting some distance between them. Aaron disembarks from the boat, but Todd finds a ledge hidden by the waterfall. They go onto the ledge and realize it leads into a small church that has long since been abandoned. They guess it was abandoned because it ended up being too uncomfortable for services. They hide there for some time, but Aaron eventually discovers the tunnel. Todd has a moment of enlightenment and says he knows what Aaron has been after this whole time. He promises Viola he knows what he's doing and calls out for Aaron, no longer hiding.

Chapter 41

Todd confronts Aaron with the truth. He's figured out that Aaron has been pursuing Todd because he wants Todd to kill him. When a boy becomes a man in Prentisstown, the Mayor forces them to take a life, to murder someone that has tried to escape. They wanted Todd to murder Aaron because his sacrifice should be special, since he was going to be the last man in their perfect, divine army. Aaron believes God wanted them to start their army, to purify the new world and turn it into Eden. Their plan was to kill Ben in front of Todd, to encourage his rage and make him murder Aaron.

Aaron taunts Todd about all the people he lost. Todd lashes out against Aaron, but he doesn't try to kill him, just tries to subdue him. He and Viola fight Aaron for some time, but Aaron is able to injure and nearly kill Viola. Todd lets his rage take over, and he tries to go for his knife which he had dropped during the battle. Viola reaches it first and uses it to kill Aaron, herself.

Chapter 42

Todd comforts Viola, who's horrified at what she's done. She says she didn't want to let Todd murder Aaron because that would be letting him win. Todd says he thinks that everyone is supposed to fall, but what matters is that they get up. This comforts Viola some, but she's still clearly affected by what she just did. They start to march towards Haven, but Viola is suddenly shot by Prentiss Jr. Todd bandages her up and goes to confront Jr. He's able to knock Jr. off his horse and disarm him. Todd leaves him behind, picking up Viola and running the rest of the way to Haven. He starts calling out for help, but nobody comes.

Finally, from one of the buildings steps out Mayor Prentiss. He refers to himself as President Prentiss now. He tells Todd that he always knew there was another way to Haven, and the army chasing after them was just an intimidation tactic for the rest of the settlements. Haven surrendered to him, and now he is in charge of the new world.

Analysis

Chapter 37

Viola brings up the theme of Never Giving Up when Todd wants to surrender. Todd is feeling overwhelmed with everything that happened. He's still reeling from losing



Manchee, but now he also has to deal with the loss of Ben, on top of all his insecurities about being a coward, as well as learning the truth about Prentisstown.

Todd asks Viola to read from his mother's journal, something that he originally avoided when Viola offered at the start of the book. This shows how much Todd has grown as a character, as well as how strong his friendship has become with Viola.

Chapter 38

Todd gets to hear about how different the world was when his mother first arrived. She's very hopeful and even talks about both Prentiss and Aaron as being good people. Todd is very touched by her words, as is Viola. They are both saddened because reading about how much Todd's mother cared for him makes them realize everything that they have lost. Todd barely got to know his parents, and as far as he knows both of his adoptive parents are dead. Viola is experiencing the same sadness, finally having the chance to focus on the fact that she too lost both of her parents when they arrived on the planet.

The closeness of Todd and Viola is shown when Todd feels like he is able to read Viola, even without the Noise. This is a big moment for Todd, since he's never had to empathize with someone like that before.

Chapter 39

Todd and Viola both feel like their hope has paid off when they get to Haven. They can see how large the town is, and how defensible it is against attack. They truly believe that they will be safe from the army, and that they'll have enough time to mount some sort of defense. Their hope falters at the arrival of Aaron, but Todd is unwilling to just give up as the final chapters show.

Chapter 40

Todd and Viola are able to outmaneuver Aaron, knowing that he won't be able to pilot his boat and shoot at them. They're able to discover a hidden ledge that leads into Haven. This restores whatever hope had been lost, and it gives Todd the opportunity to finally focus and figure out exactly what Aaron is up to.

Chapter 41

Todd shows how much he's learned during his travels. He brings up the theme about Never Giving Up. He knows that Prentiss and Aaron will feel like they've failed if they aren't able to convert Todd. Even with everything that Aaron has done to anger Todd; he's not willing to give in to his plan, at least not at first. Todd knows that he has to fight Aaron, but he tries to engage him without actually killing him.

Todd's plan falls apart when he sees the danger that Viola is in. Aaron hits her hard enough to make Todd think that she's been killed. Todd succumbs to his anger and tries to go for his knife. Before he's able to reach it, Viola recovers enough to grab the knife.



She's unwilling to let Aaron and Prentiss succeed. She takes Aaron's life, ensuring that Todd isn't the one to make the sacrifice.

Chapter 42

Viola experiences the same sense of horror that Todd did when he murdered the Spackle. Todd tries to comfort her, once again bringing up the theme of Never Giving Up. He directly tells her that he believes everyone is destined to fall in their life, but what matters the most is that they are able to push through and get back up. Todd is clearly inspired when he starts marching towards Haven. His inspiration refuses to die, not even when Jr. arrives and injures Viola. He overwhelms Jr. and carries Viola all the way into the streets of Haven, screaming out for help.

Todd's hope only carries him so far. When Prentiss steps out and reveals that he has already taken Haven, Todd feels defeated. He doesn't care that he lost to Prentiss; all he wants is help for Viola. The book ends on a cliffhanger, giving readers plenty of motivation to pick up the next book and discover the fates of Todd and Viola.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Never Giving Up in these last chapters.

Discussion Question 2

What was a shocking revelation in Todd's mother's journal?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Viola kill Aaron instead of letting Todd do it?

Vocabulary

taut, squelching, pews, pulpit, sacrificial, farewell, excruciating, sallow



Characters

Todd Hewitt

Todd is one of the protagonists of the story. He's 12 years old at the start, roughly a month away from 13, which is the time he will be considered a man. Todd feels left out because he's the only boy left in the town. He's obsessed with being a man, and it's clear that he cares a great deal about how everyone else views him.

Todd places little importance on education, preferring practical survival skills. He's very stubborn and has a hard time admitting when he's wrong. Todd tends to hold grudges, and he's very hard on himself anytime that he messes up. He considers himself weak because he's unable to bring himself to kill Aaron, or anyone else throughout the majority of the book.

Once he does take a life, Todd realizes how horrible it is to kill someone. Through Viola, he is able to grow and mature as a character. She also helps him accept the truth that everyone in Prentisstown had been lying to him, and that he needs to learn to make decisions for himself. By the end of the book, Todd has learned to stand up for himself and to make his own judgments instead of just blindly believing what he has been taught in Prentisstown.

Viola

Viola is the second protagonist of the story. She's the first woman that Todd encounters, and she helps to open his eyes to the truth of what's really going on in Prentisstown. Viola was raised on a scouting ship that was sent to the new world. She's very intelligent and clever, often coming up with lies to help Todd pass as someone from outside of Prentisstown. Viola can be stubborn like Todd, though she's intelligent enough to recognize when she's letting her emotions get the better of her. Viola is very loyal towards Todd, never giving up on him, and even going so far as to kill Aaron so Todd won't become tainted.

Manchee

Manchee is Todd's dog, who travels with him throughout the majority of the book. Although he is able to speak through the Noise, Manchee still has the normal intelligence of a dog. That means he frequently gets distracted by small animals and doesn't have much of an understanding of what's going on in the world. Manchee is incredibly loyal towards Todd, helping to save his life several times throughout the book. Manchee is ultimately killed when he rescues Todd and Viola from the clutches of Aaron.



Aaron

Aaron is the preacher at Prentisstown, and acts as one of the main antagonists throughout the book. Aaron is fully devoted to his twisted belief that the men of Prentisstown were meant to be a divine army of killers so they could take over the world and reshape it into paradise. He's so devoted to his task that he spends the whole book trying to get Todd angry enough to kill him, believing that he's supposed to be a divine sacrifice to complete the blessing of the army.

Mayor Prentiss

Mayor Prentiss acts as one of the other antagonists of the book, although he only appears in a few scenes. Todd describes him as being very organized and obsessed with control. He has a small following of men that he constantly trains with, trying to use meditation and mantras to control their Noise.

At the end of the book, Prentiss reveals that he has already taken Haven while his army was marching on the rest of the settlements. He's shown to be very clever and cunning, and also completely merciless.

Prentiss Jr.

Prentiss Jr. is the son of the mayor, and just as ruthless as his father. Like his father, he only appears a few times during the course of the book. He tries to bring in Todd earlier on, but he's foiled by Ben and Cillian. He later runs into Todd while he's fleeing the army, but he's dispatched by Viola. During that time, Jr. talked about all the terrible things he wanted to inflict on both Todd and Viola. He briefly shows up again at the end of the book when he injures Viola while she and Todd are trying to cross into Haven.

Ben

Like Cillian, Ben acts as a surrogate parent for Todd. Todd and Ben seem to have a closer relationship given that Ben is friendlier towards him. Ben apparently knew Todd's parents when they were still alive. Ben is just as protective of Todd as Cillian was. He throws himself at Prentiss Jr. to give Todd and Viola a chance to escape at the end of the book. His fate is left unknown, but it's implied that he's still alive. Ben carries a great deal of guilt for what happened when Prentisstown first rebelled. Despite that, he's also very optimistic and hopeful, and he helps to inspire Todd and Viola to keep going towards Haven.



Cillian

Cillian is one of Todd's foster parents. Not much is known about him, except that he was best friends with Ben. He disagreed with the direction that Prentisstown took, but he couldn't rebel against them because he wanted to help ensure that Todd was given a proper upbringing. He's displayed as being gruff in the beginning of the book, but despite that, he seems to clearly care for Todd. He's killed at the start of the book when he tries to delay the Prentisstown army from getting to Todd.

Wilf

Wilf is a traveling merchant that initially helps Viola and Todd pass through a field of beasts. He makes an appearance again towards the end of the book when he rescues Todd while he's trying to find Viola. At the time, Todd was starving and suffering from a fever. Wilf and his wife help nurse Todd back to help and supply him with food.

Hildy

Hildy is an old woman who originally made the bridge that connects Farbranch to the swamp. She's implied to have had previously played an active role in establishing Farbranch, and she's treated with respect. She helps Todd and Viola when they first escape from the swamp. She acts very protective of the two kids while they're in her care.

Francia

Francia is Hildy's sister and the deputy mayor of Farbranch. She's initially reluctant to let the kids in, but once they're accepted she acts very protective towards them. Her eventual fate is unknown when the Prentisstown army invades.

Matthew

Matthew is one of the citizens of Farbranch that ran away from Prentisstown. He acts aggressively towards Todd when they first meet, and he later tries to kill Todd while he's alone in Francia's barn. His fate is unclear after Todd knocks him out in the barn, perhaps even killing him.

Dr. Snow

After Todd is injured by Aaron and his sickness, Viola brings him to see Dr. Snow. Dr. Snow helps nurse Todd back to help. He acts protective towards the children when the rest of the settlement wants to kill Todd. He's very dismissive towards Viola simply because of her gender.



Symbols and Symbolism

Hunting Knife

At the start of the book, the hunting knife is symbolic of the trust and connection that Ben and Todd have towards one another. After Todd murders the Spackle, it becomes a representation of his guilt over the murder, and he constantly imagines the weapon to be bloodstained, showing his loss of innocence.

Journal

Just like the knife, the journal is symbolic of two things. The first is the love that Todd's mother had towards him. The second is Todd's trust towards Viola, since he eventually lets her read from the journal at the end of the book, something that he had initially resisted whenever she offered.

Burning Books

Mayor Prentiss had all of the books burned when he took over. This represents the control that he has over the town, since he was directly making it impossible for them to learn anything outside of what he taught.

Viola's name/speech

When Viola first meets Todd, she doesn't say a word to him. She finally decides to speak up when she realizes that she can trust Todd, and the very first thing she says is her name. She has also clearly experienced some kind of trauma and shock that has made her very reserved and careful about when she speaks and to whom.

Bridge

Hildy's bridge represents hope, that one day they will be able to use it to reconnect with Prentisstown, even though nobody has used it for years.

Turning 13

To Aaron and Mayor Prentiss, turning 13 is a special time when a boy becomes a man. To them, this means that the boy is ready to shed their innocence and become sinful, making them the perfect soldiers in their divine army.



Separate Quarters

In the settlement of Carbonel Downs, the women and men are separated and housed in separate quarters. This represents their views on women being a lesser gender, and thus needing to be separated from the men.

Music

Also in Carbonel Downs are speakers that constantly play loud music. This represents their desire for privacy, since the music makes it much harder for anyone to read the Noise coming from the men. It could also be seen as their distrust for women, since they specifically want to mask their Noise from them.

Aaron's Sacrifice

Aaron believes that Todd killing him as a sacrifice is a divine sign that their army is ready to march and cleanse the new world, turning it into a perfect paradise.

Ben's Sacrifice

Towards the end of the book, Ben offers to hold off Jr. even though it will likely mean his death. Todd doesn't understand why he's doing it. Viola explains that Ben feels so guilty because he wasn't able to help Todd's family, or everyone else that was slaughtered during the initial Prentisstown rebellion. Him fighting Jr. is his way of trying to make amends for his past failures.

Crashed Spaceship

In the beginning of the novel Viola takes Todd to her parent's downed spacecraft. Inside of it are the long dead bodies of her parents. It is evident that she's lived there for a while. The spaceship represents that there is a deeper truth that Todd hasn't been told about the Noise, his own parents, and the truth he's been told via Prentisstown.

The Sign

Aaron continues to pursue Todd trying to obtain "the sign," which he asks Todd to give him each time they encounter one another. Later, the "sign" is understood to be the act of killing Aaron by Todd's hands, a sign that New Eden can begin.



Settings

Prentisstown

Prentisstown was originally known as New Elizabeth town when the settlers first landed on the new planet. It was renamed after Mayor Prentiss staged a coup, convincing the men that the women were somehow at fault for not being infected by the Noise. The rest of the world outlawed Prentisstown, promising not to eliminate them as long as they stayed in the swamp. Over the years, Prentisstown grew and the men trained the boys to become a small army. Todd is the last boy in the town, the final piece of the army.

The start of the book takes place in Prentisstown. Todd spent his childhood there, but the reader only sees him there for a few moments. He returns to his farm, but is soon chased out by the Prentisstown army after they hear about the silence in the Noise.

Swamp

The swamp outside of Prentisstown is a dangerous place. At first, Todd doesn't believe there's anything beyond the swamp. With the map given to him by Ben, and the help of Viola, he's able to pass through the swamp and find out about the other settlements. Viola's ship crash landed in the swamp, and it's also the first place where Todd and Aaron face off.

Farbranch

Farbranch is the first settlement that Todd finds. He's amazed to see that there are men and women working together. Hildy and Francia both live in Farbranch. They try to help Viola and Todd, but the town is soon wiped out by the Prentisstown army.

The Wilds

The majority of the book takes place in the wild land between settlements. Todd and Viola occasionally discover the remains of smaller settlements that have since been abandoned. There are also the less sophisticated remains of Spackle homes throughout the area. Todd and Viola have to face off against Aaron and Prentiss Jr. while they're navigating the wild lands.

Brockley Falls

Brockley Falls is another settlement that Todd and Viola briefly pass through when Wilf guides them through some of the wild lands. This is where the very helpful Wilf lives



with his wife. Neither Viola or Todd want to stay for long, afraid that if they linger the Prentisstown army will march through the town and destroy it.

Carbonel Downs

Carbonel Downs is the settlement where Viola brings Todd after he rescues her from Aaron. Todd spends five days in a coma like state recovering from his infection. After that, he and Viola are forced to leave when the men discover that the Prentisstown army is marching on them to get Todd. It's also the spot where Todd and Ben are officially reunited, albeit briefly.

Haven

Haven is supposedly the first and largest settlement in the new world. Todd and Viola spend the majority of the book trying to reach it. They first find an abandoned church, where Aaron faces off against them one last time. Todd brings an injured Viola into Haven to get treated for her injuries, but to his horror the town is abandoned, having already surrendered to Prentiss.



Themes and Motifs

Education

One of the first themes that is stressed during the story is how important Education is. Todd first shows this theme when he's still living in Prentisstown. He talks about how once the Mayor took over, he essentially outlawed education. There was never a replacement for the school teacher, and the Mayor ordered for all of the books to be burned. That's one of the reasons Todd is so surprised when Ben gives him his mother's journal. Todd later learns that one of the reasons why the Mayor took these extremes is because he knew it would be easier to control the uneducated masses.

The theme is shown again through the character of Viola. Viola is frequently using her intelligence to outsmart her pursuers. Viola is able to use her limited equipment recovered from her ship, creating a weapon that incapacitates Jr. when he corners her and Todd early on in the book. Viola also uses her intelligence when they first meet Wilf, as well as Dr. Snow. Both times, she's able to convince them that Todd isn't from Prentisstown, knowing that the law of the land is to kill anyone from Prentisstown, even a boy.

The theme is shown once more towards the end of the book. Todd has finally shed his past identity from Prentisstown and has learned from his travels across the new world. He's able to use his unclouded intellect to figure out the plan that Aaron has. He and Viola are able to come up with a way to defeat Aaron and keep his plans from succeeding.

Solidarity

The theme of Solidarity is constantly shown throughout the course of the story and is even directly quoted by Aaron and Todd. The saying originally refers to Aaron and the Mayor's plan for Prentisstown. They want to turn all of the men of Prentisstown into killers. The reason that they get upset when Todd leaves is because they see it as a failure. In their eyes, Todd is failing by not joining their ranks. Aaron is afraid that means they've defied God's will, which is why he works so hard to catch up to Todd and goad him into murder.

The theme applies on a smaller scale to Todd and Viola as well. There are many parts throughout the book where Todd just wants to give up because he feels guilty, especially after losing Manchee. Even at the start of their friendship, Todd considers leaving because he doesn't want to risk infecting Viola. Each time, Viola encourages Todd to keep going. She knows that if Todd falls, she'll fall as well. Todd even comments several times towards the end that it's just him and Viola against the world, but as long as they're working together nothing can defeat them.



The theme is subtly shown once again with the Mayor's plan. Prentiss reveals at the end of the book that he first got the town of Haven to surrender. Once Haven surrendered, he knew that all of the smaller settlements would fall. Once one town fell, it was only a matter of time before the rest did. With each victory, his army grew larger against the unified force of Prentisstown.

Never Give Up

This theme is demonstrated constantly throughout the book, and is even named by Todd towards the end. When Todd directly references it, he's talking about what he and Viola were forced to do against Aaron. Viola feels horrible because she took Aaron's life. Todd tells Viola that he believes everyone is meant to sin. What matters is what happens after they sin. He encourages Viola to keep going.

Todd himself has to learn this lesson earlier in the book. When Todd encounters the Spackle he's still uneducated and blinded by the teachings of Prentisstown. He immediately views the Spackle as an enemy, even though it's not trying to fight him or Viola.

Todd attacks the Spackle and ends up murdering it. Afterwards, Todd realizes the mistake of his action. Todd, like Viola, is overwhelmed by his depression, but he learns to pick himself up. His determination pushes him forward, and he travels for days while fighting off starvation and an infection so he can save Viola.

The theme is demonstrated through Ben's actions at the end of the book. Ben admits that he and Cillian sat by and did nothing while the women of Prentisstown were being murdered. It was a burden that they both had to carry. Ben was crushed, but he found the courage to keep on going.

He rises up at the end and confronts Prentiss Jr. when he's pursuing Todd and Viola in the woods. This gives them the chance to escape and make it to Haven.

Violence

The theme of Violence is demonstrated constantly throughout the book and is even named by Todd towards the end. When Todd directly references it, he's talking about what he and Viola were forced to do against Aaron. Viola feels horrible because she took Aaron's life. Todd tells Viola that he believes everyone is meant to sin. What matters is what happens after they sin. He encourages Viola to keep going.

Todd himself has to learn this lesson earlier in the book. When Todd encounters the Spackle he's still uneducated and blinded by the teachings of Prentisstown. He immediately views the Spackle as an enemy, even though it's not trying to fight him or Viola. Todd attacks the Spackle and ends up murdering it. Afterwards, Todd realizes the mistake of his action. Todd, like Viola, is overwhelmed by his depression, but he learns



to pick himself up. His determination pushes him forward, and he travels for days while fighting off starvation and an infection so he can save Viola.

The theme is demonstrated through Ben's actions at the end of the book. Ben admits that he and Cillian sat by and did nothing while the women of Prentisstown were being murdered. It was a burden that they both had to carry. Ben was crushed, but he found the courage to keep on going. He rises up at the end and confronts Prentiss Jr. when he's pursuing Todd and Viola in the woods. This gives them the chance to escape and make it to Haven.

Violence breeds more violence

One of the first times where this theme becomes obvious is when Todd is learning the truth about what happened in Prentisstown after the settlers arrived in the new world. Todd believed that the men were infected by the Spackle, but that wasn't the truth. Once they arrived, all of the men were naturally infected by the planet. The Spackle didn't want anything to do with the settlers, but the settlers lashed out against them. They fought a war and easily slaughtered the technologically inferior Spackle.

After the war, the settlers were still angry because their violence did nothing to stop the problems regarding the Noise. Prentiss organized his own militia and started to preach to them, blaming the women for not having the Noise. Prentiss staged his coup, fueled by the violence from fighting the Spackle. They slaughtered the women of Prentisstown and anyone that tried to stand with them.

The men of Prentisstown still weren't satisfied after they had murdered the women and started their own town. Mayor Prentiss hungered for more power, and after he killed the inhabitants of the old town, he started to stage new plans to extend his reach further. He spends years preparing his army. During the course of the book, he keeps marching and taking more towns, forcing everyone to either join him or die. His violent actions set the stage for even more violence in the rest of the series.

Gender Equity

The theme of Gender Equality is explored throughout the course of the book as Todd and Viola explore more of the settlements. It's most obvious in Prentisstown, back when it was called New Elizabeth. Aaron and Prentiss preached to their followers that women weren't as equal as men. They frequently refer to them as whores or call them impure. This is taken to the extreme when Prentiss and Aaron organize a rebellion and have all of the women killed.

The theme is very prominently shown in the settlement of Carbonel Downs. Carbonel Downs isn't quite as bad as Prentisstown, but there's still a clear gender inequality. The women are housed in separate areas, and the ruling patriarchy doesn't value their opinion. Viola spends five days trying to convince the men that the Prentisstown army is marching upon them, but nobody listens to her simply because of her gender.



The theme is shown on a smaller scale with both Aaron and Prentiss Jr. Whenever Aaron and Jr. confront Todd, they continually underestimate Viola. Both times when they do this, Viola ends up getting the better of them.

Viola uses her scientific training to create a weapon to incapacitate Jr. after he ignores her, even taking the time to mock to Todd how useless she is. Aaron focuses entirely on Todd, treating Viola like nothing more than an object. In the end, Viola is the one that is able to finally defeat Aaron.

Styles

Point of View

"The Knife of Never Letting Go" is told from the first person perspective of the main character, Todd. Todd is telling the story directly to the reader as it happens. He frequently makes little comments directed at the reader. For example, whenever he's feeling particularly emotional he'll usually make a remark to the reader, essentially telling them not to judge him for his moment of weakness. This is especially apparent in the earlier parts of the book, when Todd is obsessed with maintaining a manly image.

Language and Meaning

Because the story is being narrated directly to Todd there's a very unique language. Todd comes from Prentisstown, which shunned a formal education. As a result, the story is filled with misspelled words. Todd relies on his phonetic pronunciation, so words like "creature," "conditions," and "cemetery" are frequently misspelled. Todd will occasionally use local terms that make sense for him, but not necessarily the reader. Fortunately, these situations are always clearly explained by descriptions. For example, Todd never actually describes what the Noise is, but it's made very clear after it's brought up that the Noise is Todd reading the thoughts of the nearby animals.

Structure

The story is structured like Todd is directly communicating to the reader through the book. The implication very early on is this is how the Noise works on the planet. Everyone is able to read everyone's thoughts, so the reader is essentially hearing the Noise of Todd throughout his adventure. Because the story is told in the present tense, everything happens in a very straight forward fashion. Todd will occasionally summarize a few days of travel when nothing relevant to the story is occurring.



Quotes

There ain't nothing but Noise in this world, nothing but the constant thoughts of men and things coming at you and at you and at you, ever since the spacks released the Noise germ during the war, the germ that killed half the men and every single woman, my ma not expected, the germ that drove the rest of the men mad, the germ that spelled the end for all Spackle once men's madness picked up a gun.

-- Todd (Chapter 1)

Importance: This quote in the first chapter helps to set up the unique setting of the book. Todd discovering the truth about the Noise is one of the driving plot points throughout the book.

And then one day Mayor Prentiss decided to burn all the books, every single one of them, even the ones in men's homes, cuz apparently books were detrimental as well and Mr. Royal, a soft man who made himself a hard man by drinking whisky in the classroom, gave up and took a gun and put an end to himself and that was it for my classroom teaching."

-- Todd (Chapter 2)

Importance: This passage shows the general state of Prentisstown. Outlawing educations is one of the ways that Prentiss controls and manipulates the town.

Ben says there used to be other settlements scattered around New World, that all the ships landed about the same time, ten years or so before I was born, but that when the war started with the spacks, when the spacks released the germs and all the other settlements were wiped out, that Prentisstown was nearly wiped out, too, that it only survived cuz of Mayor Prentiss's army skills and that even tho Mayor Prentiss is a nightmare coming and going, we at least owe him that, cuz of him we survive alone on a whole big empty womanless world that ain't got nothing good to say for itself, in a town of 146 men that dies a little more with every day that passes."

-- Todd (Chapter 2)

Importance: This passage highlights even more of the setting and explains the dark and dreary attitude throughout the town.

He pulls me to him again, hitting my lip on his collar just like Cillian but this time I don't pull away. "Always remember," he says, "when yer ma died, you became our son, and I love you and Cillian loves you, always have, always will.

-- Ben (Chapter 5)

Importance: Ben and Cillian don't get to spend too much on screen time with Todd. Their relationship is an important part of his character, and this passage highlights the strong familial bond between them.



Cuz it ain't a Spackle. "It's a girl," I say. It's a girl."
-- Todd (Chapter 6)

Importance: Todd discovering a girl is a huge turning point in the book, since it marks Todd finding out that things aren't what they seem, and the world is quite different from what he knows. Viola is also the second protagonist of the book, and after being discovered she joins Todd on his journey.

But a knife ain't just a thing, is it? It's a choice, it's something you do. A knife says yes or no, cut or not, die or not. A knife takes a decision out of your hand and puts it in the world and it never goes back again.

-- Todd (Chapter 8)

Importance: This chapter shows the importance of the knife that Todd carries with him throughout the book. It also clearly shows his feelings on the knife and murder, something which frequently comes up during the course of the book.

Viola," I hear. I spin around look at her. "What?" I say. She's looking back at me. She's opening her mouth. She's talking."

-- Todd (Chapter 12)

Importance: This is the first time that Viola talks to Todd, showing that she finally trusts him enough to start opening up.

She keeps whispering something fierce. "Every time you think, Oh, she's just emptiness, or, There's nothing going on inside her, or, Maybe I can dump her with these two, I hear it, okay? I hear every stupid thing you think, all right. And I understand way more than I want to."

-- Viola (Chapter 16)

Importance: Viola finally voices her frustration to Todd, and gives him an idea of what it's like to live being able to hear the Noise, but not actually having it yourself.

Yer ma's book will tell you more but in the meantime, the wider world has to be warned, Todd. Prentisstown is on the move. The plan has been in the works for years, only waiting for the last boy in Prentisstown to become a man."

-- Cillian (Chapter 21)

Importance: This passage details the majority of the plot for the rest of the book and helps to give some idea why Todd is so important to Prentisstown, which also gets expanded on as time goes on.

The Spackle lays where I- Where I killed him."

-- Todd (Chapter 25)

Importance: Todd killing the Spackle marks a huge change in his character, and it's something that haunts him for the rest of the book



The Noise germ wasn't Spackle warfare," he says. "That's the first thing. The germ was here when we landed. A naturally occurring phenomenon, in the air, always had been, always will be. We got outta our ships and within a day everyone could hear everyone's thoughts. Imagine our surprise."

-- Ben (Chapter 36)

Importance: Ben is starting to explain the reality of what actually happened to Todd, which has a huge effect on the plot and helps to clarify the setting.

Not all the men," Ben says. "But many. Allowing themselves to be swayed by Mayor Prentiss and the preachings of Aaron, who used to say that what was hidden must be evil. They killed all the women and all the men who tried to protect them."

-- Ben (Chapter 36)

Importance: Ben continues to share information with Todd, which completely changes the way that he sees the world. This section also helps to explain how Prentiss was able to come to power.

We weren't innocent," Ben says strongly, and suddenly his Noise tastes bitter. He sighs. "We weren't."

-- Ben (Chapter 36)

Importance: This shows the guilt that Ben feels over letting all of the women of Prentisstown get slaughtered. This gives him motivation to try and save Todd and Viola later on, since he sees it as a way to atone for his sins.

You were the last," Ben says. "If he could make every single boy in Prentisstown a man by his own meaning, then he's God, ain't he? He's created all of us and is in complete control."

-- Ben (Chapter 36)

Importance: This section clearly highlights what Prentiss and Aaron were hoping to accomplish, and why Todd is so important to them.

We've run right into a trap. We've run right off the end of the world. "Welcome," says the Mayor, "to New Prentisstown."

-- Todd (Chapter 42)

Importance: This final quote serves as a cliffhanger, and also helps to set the stage for the next book. Prentiss has already taken over Haven, and Todd has no choice but to work for him now if Viola is going to have any chance to survive.