

I Am the Messenger Study Guide

I Am the Messenger by Markus Zusak

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Plot Summary

"I am the Messenger" by Markus Zusak tells the story of a young man challenged by an unknown benefactor to become a better person by helping those around him. Through a series of assignments given to him on the aces from a deck of playing cards, Ed Kennedy learns to face his fears. He is able to rise above his feelings of incompetence as he helps others in areas where they need the help the most. Some of the messages that Ed receives are as simple as buying an ice cream cone for a struggling single mother while others put Ed in positions of real danger. At the conclusion of the novel, Ed learns that he is not only the messenger, but also the message as the man who sent Ed on his journey of self-improvement tells Ed he has learned that even an ordinary man can live beyond normal expectations.

Ed's journey begins when he becomes involved in a bungled bank robbery and helps police capture the robber by grabbing the robber's dropped gun and shooting at him. When Ed testifies at the trial for the bank robber, the robber threatens Ed, telling him that he is a dead man. A short time prior to this, Ed had received in the mail an Ace of Diamonds with three addresses and times listed on it. Ed becomes aware that he is supposed to help the people who are listed on these addresses. Through the course of the story, Ed works his way through all of the aces as well as the joker card. Those he helps include an elderly lady needing reassurance that she treated her husband right and a family who needs a new string of Christmas light to make their holiday bright. Ed is even called to give messages to his closest friends and family members.

Ed's last message, delivered on the joker card, is for Ed himself. During the delivery of this message, Ed learns that he is not only the messenger, but also the message as he shows the man who put Ed's entire journey into motion that people, even ordinary ones, can rise about their perceived abilities to make a difference in the world. Through his journey, Ed becomes more confident in his abilities and improves as a human being. Even Audrey, who is the love of Ed's life but has never allowed herself to love Ed, recognizes Ed's goodness as she finally gives in to his love. There is also a twist at the conclusion of the novel as Ed learns the identity of the man who has sent him all of the messages.



part one: the first message A - 3

part one: the first message A - 3 Summary

"I am the Messenger" by Markus Zusak tells the story of a young man challenged by an unknown benefactor to become a better person by helping those around him. Through a series of assignments given to him written on the aces from a deck of playing cards, Ed Kennedy learns to face his fears and rise about his feelings of incompetence as he helps others in areas where they need the help the most. Some of the messages are as simple as buying an ice cream cone for a struggling single mother while others put Ed in positions of real danger. At the conclusion of the novel, Ed learns that he is not only the messenger, but also the message as the man who sent Ed on his journey of self-improvement tells Ed he has learned through his experiment that even an ordinary man can live beyond what he seems capable.

In chapter A, Ed Kennedy and his friends are involved in a hold up at a bank. The gunman, who Ed know is useless from the beginning, is first distracted by Ed and Marvin arguing, then is taken off guard when the police make his get away car leave because it is double parked. The robber takes the keys to Marvin's car, but drops his gun on the way out. Ed grabs the gun and shoots the robber, keeping him from running away until the police arrive. Ed gets his first message, on the Ace of Diamonds, a few days after the robbery.

In chapter 2, Ed Kennedy gives a brief synopsis of his life. He lives alone in a shack with only a smelly, old dog named The Doorman. He has done nothing noteworthy with his life so far. He drives for a taxi company, but had to lie about his age to get that job. He has one younger brother who is studying at a university to get a law degree. He has two sisters, one who got pregnant at 17 and the other who got married. He has three friends: Audrey, Ritchie and Marvin with whom he plays cards. He loves Audrey but says she won't love him in return because of the way her family treated her as a child.

In chapter 3, Ed's mother is proud of him for his part in capturing the bank robber. The story appears in the local paper. A radio news show even carries the story.

It is on a Tuesday when Ed receives his first message. A small envelope containing the Ace of Diamonds with three addresses written on it is sent to him in the mail. As he is pondering the card, Ed's mother calls and berates him for forgetting to pick up her coffee table. Before she hangs up, Ed asks if she sent the card. She did not.

The next morning Ed visits the three addresses listed on the card. That evening, Ed tells his friends about the strange message he has received. His friends tell him they didn't send the card. Audrey believes that something is going to happen at each of these three addresses that it is his responsibility to stop. Audrey comes to visit Ed Wednesday night. He lies when he tells her he plans to start with the addresses the next day.



part one: the first message A - 3 Analysis

These first chapters set up the framework for Ed's story. Ed feels as if he is worthless and has done nothing of any use with his life. His mother's opinion of him echoes his own. He has three siblings; all of whom he believes has done better in life so far than he. Ed has even had to lie about his age to get his unglamorous job as a taxi driver. Ed's mother often tells Ed that he is the only one of her children for whom she feels no pride. It is only after the Ed helps catch the robber in a failed bank heist that Ed's mother says she is proud of him at all.

Ed lives alone in an old shack with a dog. His friends Marv and Ritchie still live at home with their parents. Audrey lives alone like Ed does. He loves her but says that because of the way she was treated as a child, she has made up her mind not to love anyone. Ed does not seem motivated to do anything active to try to win Audrey's love. The group of four friends often gets together to play cards.

Playing cards quickly become a theme in this book. First, the structure of the book follows the structure of a deck of cards. There are five parts of the book. One part for each of the four suits of cards in a deck; aces, spades, diamonds and hearts. A final part of the book corresponds to the jokers in a deck of cards with one chapter for each of the four jokers. Ed and his friends often get together to play cards and have fun together. When Ed begins receiving the playing cards in the mail, he realizes that these cards are not part of a game but instead represent something more serious.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of this book is the way that author Markus Zusak gives everything its own human-like personality and characteristics with his use of personification. When Marvin stands on his front porch in chapter 3, for instance, the breeze is described as looking away, as if it were embarrassed. In another area of chapter 3 Ed thinks about making a phone call, but states that the phone "beats me to it" as if the phone had the ability to think, reason and ring before Ed has the chance to make a call on his own.

Marv's car is a very interesting object in the novel. From the beginning it is stressed that the car is useless. Even the gunman has told Marv the car is useless. The cops who question the friends after the heist suggest to Marv that he get a new car. Through all of this jesting Marv is highly protective of his car and its reputation. He tells the police that although he has plenty of money, he has other priorities. This statement will be important later on in the novel.



part one: the first message 4 - 8

part one: the first message 4 - 8 Summary

In chapter 4, Ed gets a subpoena citing him into court to testify against the bank robber. During court the robber tells Ed that he is a dead man. Ed is haunted by the man's words.

In chapter 5, Ed learns the gunman will only have to serve six months in prison for his crime. Ed tries to forget the man's threat as he works up his courage to visit the first address. He is aware the man is raping his wife. He sees their daughter sitting on the front porch, crying. Ed comes to the conclusion that he has been chosen to care. He knows he must face this drunk man.

In chapter 6, Ed sees the little girl and her mother at the grocery store. He recognizes the woman's voice. Both the woman and her daughter are beautiful. When she bends down to look at soup packets, Ed sees her begin to cry. He asks if she is all right.

In chapter 7, Ed decides not to do anything about the Edgar Street situation yet. He wants to deal with a few more situations first and build up his confidence. A lonely, elderly lady lives at 13 Harrison Avenue. During a game of cards, Ed decides he will go visit this lady if he draws the Ace of Diamonds. He does draw this card. When Ed knocks on the lady's door, she believes Ed is a man named "Jimmy" and is happy to see him. The two talk for several hours. When Milla goes to bed, Ed goes home and makes himself and his dog some coffee.

In chapter 8, Ed visits his mother. He learns that she has traded that coffee table for one that Ed's brother recommended. Ed feels like she is trying to get him out of the house because she is expecting "important" guests. The next time that he visits Milla, she asks him to read to her. Ed learns that Jimmy was Milla's husband, he is impressed by how deeply she loved him.

Later, Ed and his friends' card game is interrupted by the phone ringing. The caller refers to Ed as Jimmy. Ed knows from this call that he needs to move on to another address. That night, Ed and the Doorman walk to the cemetery. The security worker helps him find James and Milla's gravestone. He learns that James died in the military service nearly 60 years ago.

part one: the first message 4 - 8 Analysis

What is striking about his section is the hatefulness with which Ed's mother treats him. She seems to have respect for all of her children with the exception of Ed. Although she has nagged Ed to bring her a coffee table, she trades in this table for one that her other son recommends. As Ed tries to talk to his mother, he gets the feeling that she is trying to get rid of him so that she can entertain her more important friends. Her pride in her



son for helping to catch a bank robber seems to be very short lived and is, in fact, blotted out by his actions in forgetting the coffee table.

Also in this section, note the success of Ed's first mission. Although he is playing the role of the late husband of a lonely old lady, he notes how much better she treats him than his own mother does. Ed enjoys playing the part of Jimmy because Milla respects and loves Jimmy.

It is also important to note Ed's courtroom experience. Because he has to take time off during his work shift to go to court, Ed wears his work uniform. The judge is obviously offended because Ed did not dress more formally. Ed indicates that he believes the judge wishes he could put Ed on trial. Also note that after the trial, the gunman talks to Ed as he walks by even though his lawyer tells him not to. The gunman tells Ed that he is a dead man. Ed, of course, takes this literally as a threat and believes the man plans to kill him. It will be found later in the book that the gunman actually had a different meaning in mind when he delivered this message to Ed. The policewoman recognizes the gunman as a person who will not follow through on a death threat. She tells Ed the gunman spent the morning crying. She believes he is not the type who would take the chance on going back to jail, nor would he be the type to get hard enough in jail to actually commit a murder.

The theme of playing cards continues in this section of chapters. For instance, Ed decides to go visit Milla only after the correct card, the Ace of Diamonds turns up during a card game. Milla also fittingly calls Ed a card during one of their visits.



part one: the first message 9 - K

part one: the first message 9 - K Summary

In chapter 9, Ed is still too scared to face the Edgar Street situation so he goes to 6 Macedoni Street where he watches a young girl run. She wears no shoes. Although he realizes the girl's need must have something to do with her running, he can't quite put his finger on what it might be.

The girl recognizes Ed from the newspaper articles about the bank robbery. She doesn't mind him watching her, but doesn't want to have to talk. Ed watches the girl as she leaves school with her friends. He notices that she becomes shy around boys. Ed learns the girl's name is Sophie when he goes to a weekend track meet. Sophie comes in second. Ed hears her mention to her father as she takes off her spiked running shoes that she thought the shoes were supposed to bring good luck.

In chapter 10, Ed tells Audrey that he is still working on the first card when she asks him about her assignments. At Sophie's next race, Ed realizes that she does not run the same in the old shoes as she does when she is barefoot. Ed takes Sophie's father an empty shoe box and tells that he has bought Sophie a new pair of shoes. At the next meet, she runs in her bare feet. Sophie is tripped and gets behind at the first of the race. Sophie catches up to all the runners but Annie. Although she doesn't win first place, Sophie is happy because she has finally run her best.

In chapter J, Sophie thanks Ed after the match. He notices she is more confident and will actually look him in the eyes. Sophie asks Ed if he is a saint. Ed replies to her that he is "just another stupid human."

In chapter Q, Ed watches reruns of *The Dukes of Hazard* as he tries to work up the courage that he needs to go and face the violence on Edgar Street. On a Thursday night, Ed finally feels called to return to Edgar Street. He is scared, but he walks up the steps onto the porch when he hears the raping start. The little girl meets him at the door and asks if he is here to save them. He says he is there to try but cannot work up the courage to go into the bedroom. The girl gives him a fierce hug and thanks him for trying. Later, Ed gets a phone call telling him to look in his letterbox. When he does, there is a gun there.

In chapter K, Ed sits in his kitchen believing he is the unluckiest man alive and thinking up reasons why he can't kill the man. He wonders what will happen if he doesn't shoot the man. The Doorman wants a pat but Ed tells him to get lost. The look in the dog's eyes makes Ed give the dog a pat, then fix both of them some coffee.

At work the next day, Ed sees Audrey kissing her new boyfriend and wishes he had the gun then. He asks his boss, Jerry Boston, if he can use the cab to help his brother move. Boston at first says no, then changes his mind once he gets his morning coffee.



Later that day Marv calls and asks Ed why he and Audrey aren't at the card game. Ed explains Audrey is at her new boyfriend's house and he has to go kill someone. Marv doesn't think he's being serious.

That night, Ed takes a flask of doped vodka with him and drives his cab to the bars. He finds the man who lives at 45 Edgar Street and offers him a free ride. He also gives him the vodka that is doped with sleeping pills. Ed drives his cab to the Cathedral, a secluded rocky summit of a mountain, to kill the man. Once he reaches the Cathedral, Ed presses the gun into the man's spine as they walk to the summit. The man goes to sleep and Ed wakes him just as it is becoming daylight. He explains to the man why he is killing him. He makes the man admit what he did to his wife and how he made her feel. Then he shoots.

part one: the first message 9 - K Analysis

In this section of chapters, Ed completes his first mission. He has finished the assignments listed on the Ace of Diamonds card. Notice Ed's thoughts in chapter 10 when Audrey asks him about the playing card. He considers that Audrey knew from the start that he did not throw away the playing card even though he said that he did. He thinks that this is so because diamonds are valuable and actually need protecting. All of his assignments, in their own way, were diamonds. Milla was a diamond in the way that she treated her husband and loved him deeply. Sophie was a diamond in the way that she didn't recognize her own ability and beauty, but had the courage to take a chance a run bare foot because this was the way she ran best. Although the man from Edgar Street was in no way a diamond, his wife and daughter were. As Ed believes in his thoughts, these two women were in desperate need of protection.

Zusak continues his beautiful writing style with continued personification. He describes the silence of the nights when Ed waits outside the Edgar Street house as being swollen, and scared and slippery. When the man comes home, however violence, "sticks its fingers into everything and tears it open." It is at these times that even the clouds watch and back away. The inanimate objects and conditions are described in such a way that they mimic what Ed is feeling and thinking as he stands outside the house. These descriptions magnify the fear that Ed is feeling and the danger that is associated with the situation.

In chapter 10, Zusak uses a literary device most often used in plays where a character breaks out of his role for a moment and speaks directly to the audience. This device is called a soliloquy. As Ed is standing with his gun to the Edgar Street man's head, he pleads for his reader to give him advice on what he should do in his situation. Even as he pleads with the reader, however, Ed realizes that his readers are too distant to do anything about his situation.

Note also the comments that Ed makes about Marv when he visits the house at the Edgar Street address. Marv once had a girlfriend who lived in this area of town. Marv bought the unroadworthy Ford Falcon when her parents took her and left town

unexpectedly. Marv had intended to go get the girl but had never done so. Ed notes that it is at this point that Marv became tight and argumentative.



part two: the stones of home A - 5

part two: the stones of home A - 5 Summary

In chapter A, Ed tries to sort out his feelings about what has just happened. He wonders if the man was surprised that he was still alive. Ed just wants to go inside his house and hug his dog. They share a coffee. Marv calls to find out if Ed plans to play in the Annual Sledge Game. Ed tells him he has to think about it. He takes the gun out of the trunk of the cab and puts it in his drawer. He tries to sleep, but dreams about the man from Edgar Street. He wonders if the man has made it back into town yet. Ed returns the cab and then takes the Doorman for a walk. They visit Marv's house where Ed tells Marv he will play in the annual game.

The next day Sophie visits Ed and the Doorman as they enjoy ice cream cones in the park. Sophie tells Ed that she misses him and Ed admits that he misses the girl as well. When a car horn blows, Sophie has to go. She asks Ed if he is okay and he replies that he is waiting for the next ace. When she asks if he is ready for it, he says no, but that he will get it anyway.

In chapter 2, Ed returns home to find two men eating meat pies in his house. The next thing Ed remembers is the Doorman waking him up by licking the blood off his face. Ed passes out again. When he comes to, the men are calling him by name. They slap Ed for having a sour and disrespectful tone of voice. Ed asks who sent them but they cannot tell him. The two men, who go by the names Keith and Daryl, refer to themselves as hit men and take the gun from Ed's drawer. The men tell Ed that he is doing well and give him another card in an envelope. They say they know he didn't kill the man from Edgar Street and hit him in the ribs, then the back. Ed passes out.

In chapter 3, Ed opens the envelope and finds the Ace of Clubs and a letter. The man who is orchestrating Ed's actions tells Ed that he is doing a good job. The Edgar Street man had taken a train out of town. The words on the Ace of Clubs instruct Ed to "say a prayer at the stones of home."

In chapter 4, Ed goes to Audrey's house the first thing the next morning to tell her that he has gotten another card. Her boyfriend has spent the night and Ed is offended when Audrey refers to him as "just Ed." He runs away. Audrey visits him at his house. He tells her what is written on the Ace of Clubs card. He tells her that he wishes it was he with her and not the other guy. Audrey tells him that he is her best friend. At the conclusion of the chapter Ed decides he has to pull himself together and make a decision.

In chapter 5, Ed is driving a prostitute named Alice into the city. She is kind to him and tells him not to worry so much. He imagines her asking him to come back and pick her up in the morning but she doesn't. He fanaticizes about her the rest of the evening.



part two: the stones of home A - 5 Analysis

In chapter A of this section, there is a lingering question of whether or not Ed actually killed the man from Edgar Street. It turns out that Ed did not kill him. As he was shooting into the sun, he missed his target. Because he had only one bullet, Ed does not have another chance to shoot. Ed's strange benefactor tells Ed that the man took a train out of town.

In this section, Ed is paid a visit by two of the men who call themselves hit men. The connotation of the term "hit man" makes it seem as if Ed's life is in danger. The two men also beat Ed up quite badly. In the letter that the men give Ed, the leader of the men writes to Ed that he is doing well at his assignments. At this point, it is uncertain if the men really intend to hurt Ed or if it is just a ploy to throw Ed off the real intention of their visit. Questions continue to mount in connection with Ed's strange assignments. Who are the people? Why have they picked Ed? What has he been chosen for?

Note also the continued theme of cards as Ed makes comparison between life and a card game. He indicates that the men, whoever they may be, are playing with Ed's life just as one might play a card game. Ed realizes that his life is not to be played with as one might play with a deck of cards.



part two: the stones of home 6 and 7

part two: the stones of home 6 and 7 Summary

In chapter 6, Ed decides that he is ready to take on the second card. He and the Doorman set out to find the stones of home but realize they have no idea where to look. Ed spends some time with Marv but is thinking too much about the Ace of Clubs to really pay good attention to Marv. He finally asks Marv how he would feel if he knew he had to be somewhere, but didn't know how to get there. Marv says he'd be frustrated because he couldn't change what might be happening there.

One night, a strange man who knows Ed's name hails his cab. This man takes Ed to a place where Ed remembers what the stones of home are. He climbs to a point where there are huge stones where he and his younger brother used to go fishing. There are three names carved into the rocks: Thomas O'Reilly, Angie Carusso, and Gavin Rose.

In chapter 7, Ed finds Thomas O'Reilly in his house on Henry Street after first visiting his brother, Tony O'Reilly. Thomas is the pastor of a small church. The first time that Ed tries to visit Father O'Reilly, he turns back because he is stopped by three men asking for money, cigarettes and his jacket. At the card game later that day Ed wins for a change. Later he tells Audrey about the three names scratched in the stones. Audrey asks Ed who knows he so well that he would know to carve the names on those particular rocks. Ed can think of no one.

The next day Ed tries again to visit the priest. Ed is about to speak to the priest about why he is there when they are interrupted by an argument next door. The father calms the couple down. Then he tells Ed the couple is "bloody useless." Ed is surprised by the father's straight forwardness in his descriptions. The priest tells Ed that if his church were a business, it would have closed down years ago. Ed confesses to the father that he doesn't know why he is there but that he expects the reason will come to him. The priest walks Ed out of the house and introduces him to the three men begging on the street. He asks them not to bother Ed again. Later at a card game at Marv's place Ed asks his friends to go to church with him after he picks up the Ace of Clubs in the third game. They hesitantly agree to do so.

Ed's mother calls him to remind him to call his sister on her birthday. Ed can't find his sister's telephone number so he has to call his mother back. She berates him during both calls.

That Sunday at church, Ed and his friends join about a dozen elderly people at Father O'Reilly's church. The four of them sit outside the church after the sermon. The father thanks them for coming. At the conclusion of the chapter, Ed has decided that his assignment here is to fill the father's church up.



part two: the stones of home 6 and 7 Analysis

Even after another interaction between another one of the men assumed to be connected with the source from which the cards are coming, it is still uncertain if the people who are messing with Ed are trying to harm him or to hurt him. The man in question requests a cab ride then refuses to pay his fare. He causes Ed to leave his cab, with the keys in the ignition and the doors open, which is a cardinal sin in the taxi driving business, but he helps Ed to remember where the stones of home are. When Ed returns to his taxi, the doors are closed and the keys have been hidden above the visor. It is assumed that the man who first drew Ed away from his cab is the one who took care to make sure no one would steal it.

Audrey asks Ed who would know him well enough to know a place that Ed had visited in his childhood in order to determine the identity of the person sending the cards. Ed tells Audrey that he has no idea who might know him well enough to know all of these things about him. Ed does not recognize the man who took him to the place where the stones of home were, nor has he ever seen him before.

Faith becomes a theme in this series of chapters as the people whom Ed meets wonder if Ed is a saint. In past chapters, Sophie has already asked Ed if his is a saint to which Ed replies that he is just another stupid human. It seems automatically assumed that if a person does a good deed, they do it from a religious prompting. Father O'Reilly, however, recognizes that not all people who do good deeds are necessarily religious. As he tells Ed, there are numbers of people who do good, but have no knowledge of God. He believes that Ed is one of these people. The idea that the writer might be trying to get across is that you don't have to be a religious person to do good deeds. On the other hand, Ed is surprised often by the seemingly impious behaviors of the priest. First, the father's language surprises Ed because Father O'Reilly is so frank in his descriptions. Ed is also surprised to learn that the man of God smokes and doesn't have a good relationship with his brother. So even though a person may be religious, they still have bad habits and bad relationships. Life is not either all good or all bad and it is wrong to stereotype and person as "good" because they attend church or "bad" because they don't.



part two: the stones of home 8 - K

part two: the stones of home 8 - K Summary

In chapter 8, Ed decides to throw a party with free beer to get people into Father O'Reilly's church. Marv and Ed spray paint the information about the party on the street as advertisement. Everyone, even the cops who come to question Father O'Reilly about the advertising for the event, plans to attend the celebration. Ed has even invited Father O'Reilly's brother to the service.

On the day of the party, the church is full. During the service, the father has planned some surprises himself including a trio of musicians and special scripture readers. In his sermon, Father O'Reilly encourages the people of the town to get together and to help each other. After services, the people eat and drink; and then sing songs with the help of a karaoke machine. Milla finds some friends with whom she went to school. Ed sings with Audrey and dances with Milla, Sophie and Audrey. The last thing that Ed can remember seeing that day is Father O'Reilly and his brother sitting together on the church steps smoking cigarettes.

In chapter 9, Father O'Reilly pays Ed a visit. He doesn't say anything, but Ed believes he has come to thank him and just can't find the words. Later, the police come and bring Ed a scrub brush and liquid cleaning solution. He spends the rest of the night scrubbing the spray paint off the road.

In chapter 10, Ed has found Angie Carusso. He watches as she walks her kids to school, goes to work, and then on her payday, buys her three children ice cream cones. Ed has also found the boy named Gavin Rose. This teenaged boy has an attitude. Ed watches as Gavin and his brother fight with each other before and after school. Ed approaches Gavin after a fight with his brother and Gavin tells Ed he wants to kill his brother. Ed wonders if either of the boys have ever been tested in their entire lives. He notes that they are about to be.

In chapter J, Ed buys an ice cream cone for Angie Carusso. The color of the desert on her lips makes an impression on Ed. So does the promise that Angie's daughter makes to her mother that she will give her mother some of her ice cream next week.

In chapter Q, Ed beats up Gavin after Gavin and his brother have a big fight. He makes sure the boy doesn't see his face. Ed walks to the closest phone booth and calls the Rose home. He suggests to Daniel that he go find his brother and help him. Ed returns to the road in time to see Daniel helping Gavin home.

In Chapter K, Ed takes a walk up to the stones of home. He notices there is a large check next to Father O'Reilly's name and also one next to Angie Carusso. However, there isn't one next to Gavin Rose. He wonders what he has left to do. A few days later, he is followed by a group of teenaged boys. Gavin and Daniel Rose are in the group.



They beat Ed up as a means of getting revenge. That evening as Ed looks into the mirror at his bruised face, he feels he is looking into the face of the Ace of Clubs.

part two: the stones of home 8 - K Analysis

In these chapters, Ed finishes the assignments given to him on the Ace of Clubs. It is probably no coincidence that he has been "clubbed" twice in this second part of the book. His first clubbing was given to him by the hit men who visited his apartment. The second is given to him by the Rose brothers in their attempt to get revenge on Ed for beating up Gavin. It is interesting that Ed's own beating was a part of the requirements for finishing that assignment, however, the two boys needed a common enemy against which to join forces and fight. Ed became this enemy.

It is also interesting to note that some of Ed's assignments seem very small and insignificant while others seem much more important. The effect of these assignments, however, seems to be to make the receiver happy. Although Angie Carusso's ice cream cone doesn't cost Ed much, it makes her just as content as Father O'Reilly's full sanctuary pleases him.



part three: trying times for ed kennedy A - 3

part three: trying times for ed kennedy A - 3 Summary

In chapter A, Ed feels confident he is ready for the next card. When he hears a knock on the door, he thinks it is the card being delivered but it is only Marv asking him to breakfast before the sledge game. During the game, Ed is set up to guard a man who reminds him of Mimi from The Drew Carey Show. Although Ed mostly lets this man run over him, at the end of the game Ed tackles the man and leaves him in a crumpled hump. Ed feels guilty. At halftime Ed finds a young boy, named Jay, petting him the Doorman. Jay promises to keep an eye on the dog. When Ed returns, however, both Jay and the dog are gone.

In chapter 2, Ed and Audrey search for the Doorman. As Ed turns back to the tree where the dog was originally, he sees the boy and dog. There is a lady with them. Ed tries to run her down but is not successful. Jay tells Ed the card is for the person who owns the Doorman. Jay claims the dog is his. Ed pays twenty dollars for the card and the return of his dog.

In Chapter 3, Marv talks Ed into attending a victory party for the sledge game. He sits with Marv at the party awhile, but then heads out to work on solving the riddle of the latest card. The card has the names Graham Greene, Morris West and Sylvia Plath on it. He doesn't recognize the names, but that night he has a dream about being in school. The teacher hangs dead in front of the black board with the words "Barren Woman" written on it.

When Ed wakes up, he remembers that the poem "Barren Woman" was written by Sylvia Plath. He deduces that all of the names on the card are those of writers. Later that day while talking with Audrey, Ed gives into the urge to kiss her. He gets blood on her and quickly apologizes. Audrey accepts the apology and reminds him that she does not want to do that with him. Later, Ed goes to the library and checks out books written by the three writers listed on the card. He starts reading and falls asleep. When he wakes, he finds a napkin telling him that the assignment is simpler than he thinks. As he is walking the Doorman, it comes to Ed that all he has to do is match street names to one of the writers' books. Using this process, Ed narrows his search to three streets. He later finds that each of these stories has a club drawn on the page the number of which corresponds to the address he must visit.

part three: trying times for ed kennedy A - 3 Analysis

In these chapters, Ed begins to feel that he is gaining confidence. Although he has been physically battered, Ed feels that he is stronger than he ever was before in his life. He



has made great strides from the young boy who felt he was not capable of doing anything noteworthy with his life. Ed's newfound strength also spreads to other areas of his life. One day while Audrey is visiting with Ed, he takes a chance and kisses her. The action surprises them both. Audrey reminds him that she does not want to have that type of relationship with Ed.

Notice also in this section that Ed is working on the Ace of Spades. Because of the symbol of spades, this card requires that Ed do some digging work to uncover clues to discover which addresses he must visit next. It is interesting that even in this section, one of the writers that are listed on the card is one that Ed knew from his education. It brings back memories of his education and of one teacher in particular.

Another aspect of this chapter is Ed's attitude toward the sledge game. Apparently this game is the most important thing in Marv's existence. It isn't for Ed, however, in fact he is sickened that he is called upon to hurt another person for the sake of a game. He is so distressed, in fact, that he leaves the game after the play in which he plows down his opponent. In earlier sections, Ed has described himself as being the type of person who is not interested in violence or hurting others. This seems to be proven when he becomes so upset by his actions in the game.

One specific interesting quote in this section is the quote, "I didn't know words could be so heavy" in the third chapter. This quote is most interesting because of its double meaning. The most obvious meaning of this quote is that the books he is carrying, which include words, are physically heavy. A deeper meaning is that words are heavy in the sense that they can hurt and wound emotionally.



part three: trying times for ed kennedy 4 - 9

part three: trying times for ed kennedy 4 - 9 Summary

In chapter 4, Ed visits the family at 114 Glory Road. Ed realizes what he has to do when one of the children invites him back to see their Christmas lights. When Ed goes back he sees the faded string of lights with only four working bulbs. He buys them new lights and leaves them on the front porch.

In chapter 5, the Tatupu family finds where Ed lives, picks him up and takes him to their house. Once there, one of the kids plugs in the new Christmas lights and the dark house is lit up with color. Lua tells Ed the children believe this will be the best Christmas ever because of the new lights.

In chapter 6, as the children dance around under the lights, Ed watches as Lua kisses his wife and she kisses him back. He realizes how beautiful people are.

In chapter 7, Marie makes Ed come in the house with them for a cup of coffee. They tell him that he has been the only person who has been kind to them since they moved into the house two years ago. They give him a card, made by the children, and a stone decorated with a pattern like a cross as their way of saying "thank you." As he leaves, Lua asks Ed if he really lived in their house at one time. Ed has to be honest and answer "no." Lua looks inquisitive, but does not question Ed any further.

In Chapter 8, Ed takes the Doorman with him when he visits 23 Clown Street, an Italian restaurant named Melusso's. He sits three nights outside the restaurant with nothing happening. Audrey visits him one night and spends the night. She tells Ed that she misses him. Ed believes she misses the way he used to be, before he started getting the cards. Ed wakes up to the man who ran from his taxi knocking at the door. The man tells Ed to be at Melusso's at 8 p.m.

In Chapter 9, Ed fixes Audrey cereal in the morning. Before she leaves, she tells Ed that it is he who knows her best, that he treats her better than anyone else. After she leaves, Ed thinks about what the man told him the night before. Ed is at the restaurant at 8 p.m. He watches as a man waits for his date. The man's date turns out to be Ed's mother. It is the first time that Ed can remember his mother looking like a woman. Ed thinks of his father and is depressed. He watches his mother with her date and wonders why it bothers him so much. He suddenly realizes it is because she is dating and he is utterly alone.



part three: trying times for ed kennedy 4 - 9 Analysis

For the first time, one of Ed's assignments affects him directly. He is forced to face the idea that his mother is dating. This saddens Ed because it is so soon after the death of his father. Ed also notes how comfortable his mother seems with the man and wonders exactly how long they have been seeing each other. Ed finally realizes that the dating does not bother him just because of the affect it might have had on his father, but because he is so totally alone. This comes just on the heels of Audrey having spent the night with him. He loves Audrey and believes she is beautiful. Audrey, however, looks at their relationship as one of just friendship.

More information about Ed and Audrey's relationship is given in this section. It has been known that Ed and Audrey have been close friends for quite a long time. In this section it is recorded that Audrey spends the night often with Ed. There is no sexual activity, only friendship. But Ed has gotten to know Audrey well enough that he knows what she likes and what she doesn't. Even though Audrey tells Ed she does not want a close relationship, but also tells Ed that he perhaps is closer to her and cares more for her than anyone else.



part three: trying times for ed kennedy 10 - K

part three: trying times for ed kennedy 10 - K Summary

In Chapter 10, Ed waits on his mother's front porch until she returns home. He asks her about her date. She treats him hatefully and dismissively. Ed asks her why she hates him so much. She tells him it is because he reminds her of his father. The pain of this response is worse than all he has been through on account of the cards. Ed asks his mother if she was seeing that man while his father was still alive. Her actions say she did. His final question "did dad know?" causes her to turn her back and cry.

In Chapter J, Ed calls his mother to make sure she's okay. She starts in on her usual rant because he woke her up. He hangs up on her.

In Chapter Q, Ed realizes the message for his mother was the first time that a message had touched his own life. He visits Father O'Reilly, who reminds him that everything happens for a reason. Later, Ed goes to the Bell Street address which turns out to be an old movie theater. The owner, Bernie Price, gives Ed a private showing of Casablanca. Because he misses the reel change, Bernie tells Ed to come back for a free movie, with his girlfriend. Bernie also tells Ed that he was told Ed would be coming. Ed questions Bernie and deduces that it was Daryl and Keith who told Bernie about him.

Ed convinces Audrey to go with him to the theater the following day. Bernie plays Cool Hand Luke for them. Halfway through the movie, Ed asks Audrey if it is okay to ask Bernie to watch with them. She approves and although he won't come at first, he sits on the other side of Audrey a few minutes later. Audrey takes Ed's hand. He looks over to see that she is also holding Bernie's hand. At the reel change, they notice a strange person in the projector room. They have left a reel with Ed's name on it.

In chapter K, the reel with Ed's name on it shows footage of Ed being beat up by the Rose boys, carrying books from the library, and confronting his mother on the porch. Words on the screen tell Ed it is time to move on. Audrey cries at the images. When they return to their seats, the Ace of Hearts has been left in Ed's place.

part three: trying times for ed kennedy 10 - K Analysis

In this chapter, Ed is finally able to address the problems that he has had with his mother through the years. He is surprised that it is because Ed reminds her of his father that his mother hates him. Ed wonders why it is so bad that he is like his father. He realizes his father was a drunk, but also believes that his father was a kind and generous man. Ed is sickened when he learns that his mother was having an affair on

his father while they were still married. Ed does, however, realize that it is not just because his father never took his mother out of the town in which they lived that life never improved.

Another interesting aspect of this section is that Audrey learns firsthand about what has been happening to Ed during his work with the cards from the movie that the men leave in Bernie's theater. Audrey cries as she realizes all that Ed has gone through to complete the assignments on the cards. This was also convenient way for the author to give Audrey a closer look at the kind of person that Ed is becoming.



part four: the music of hearts A - 3

part four: the music of hearts A - 3 Summary

In chapter A, Ed sees a man on a bench as he and Audrey leave the theater whom he thinks is the man who left the card. The Ace of Hearts has the titles of the movies *The Suitcase*, *Cat Ballou* and *Roman Holiday* written on it. Ed delivers Christmas cards, an ace card with a message on it, to all the people he has been brought into contact with by the cards. Sophie sees him and speaks to him when he delivers her card. Father O'Reilly also asks if he is okay. Ed says no. As he goes through the days leading up to the Christmas holiday, all Ed can hear pounding in his ears is the sound of the Ace of Hearts.

In chapter 2, the friends have their Christmas Eve celebration and Marv kisses the Doorman as he promised. Audrey has to leave early with her boyfriend, so the others go to a town bonfire. Angie and her children are there. They buy Ed an ice cream for Christmas. A father disciplining his son reminds Ed of his own father and he goes to visit his father's grave. It is his first Christmas without his father. As he sits next to his father's grave, he feels badly that he didn't have the courage to speak at his father's funeral. When he returns home, Ritchie is asleep on the porch while Marv sleeps in his car. Ed invites the two of them to spend what is left of the night. Ed thinks about the Ace of Hearts.

In chapter 3, Ed spends some time with his family at Christmas. Instead of being polite, however, Ed is honest in his replies to Ingrid that she has not heard much about him, and to Tommy that they won't see each other soon. His mother is hateful to him as usual. Instead of giving into his temper, however, Ed simply tells his mother that she is ugly when she smokes. Tommy stops Ed before he leaves and the two talk. His mother also stops him. Ed tells her that it is the person who must change before a change of place will help them to be happy.

Ed goes to pick up Milla. The two talk and eat leftover turkey. Milla gives him the gift of a suit, shirt, and shoes. He calls a cab to take her home. It happens that it is Simon's cab that picks them up. On the way home, Simon tells Ed that Audrey loves Ed. Ed reminds Simon that it is Simon that Audrey wants.

part four: the music of hearts A - 3 Analysis

In this section of chapters, Ed finally reacts to his family that is cathartic for him. Even though his brother's girlfriend politely tells Ed that she has heard much about him, Ed does not let her get away with the polite lie. Instead, he lets her know that he knows that his name never comes up in conversation. He has the same response when Tommy later suggests the two get together. He knows that Tommy will never call him up with the intentions of inviting him to lunch. Ed also tells his mother that even if his father had



moved them out of that town, things would not have changed if she had not changed her opinion and perspective. Ed has realized that a person's happiness is dependent on their mindset, not their physical location.

Notice also the word picture that Markus Zusak draws of Ed and his brother Tommy as they talk on their mother's porch. As the "good" son, Tommy sits in the light of the front porch steps while Ed, the "bad" son, sits in the dark. Ed indicates that he would have liked to stay there with Tommy until the sun shone on both of them. However, Ed realizes that instead of waiting for others' approval to come to him, represented by the sunshine, he must go out and chase down this respect.



part four: the music of hearts 4 - 6

part four: the music of hearts 4 - 6 Summary

In chapter 4, Ed visits Bernie at the Bell Street Cinema to see what he can learn about the three movies listed on the Ace of Hearts. One movie stars Audrey Hepburn. Another stars Lee Marvin. The Suitcase is directed by a man with the same last name as Ritchie. Ed deduces that his last three messages are to be delivered to Audrey, Marvin and Ritchie.

As Ed is sitting outside Ritchie's house wondering what message it is he is supposed to give him, he is visited by Keith and Daryl. They tell him he is not thinking clearly about the message intended for Ritchie because he is too close to Ritchie. Keith suggests that Ed should already know what to do for his best friend.

In chapter 5, it is indicated that Ritchie's sin is that he has no purpose to his life. His days consist of going to the pub and betting shop. Ed breeches the topic of Ritchie's late nights at one of their card games. Ritchie comes back later to talk to Ed about the topic. When Ritchie questions Ed whether or not he's been following him, Ed tells Ritchie about the cards. Ed tells Ritchie that he is a disgrace to himself. The next night as Ed stands outside Ritchie's house, Ritchie comes out and suggests they go to the river. Ritchie tells Ed that he used to think he had chronic fatigue syndrome, but has decided he is just lazy. He tells Ed that he wishes that he had the ability to want.

In chapter 6, Ritchie starts looking for a job. Ed realizes that the message for Marv has something to do with all the money that Marv has in the bank. Ed considers three tactics for dealing with Marv but finally realizes, with the help of a homeless man, that he needs to ask Marv for money.

part four: the music of hearts 4 - 6 Analysis

It is in these chapters that Ed begins dealing with his friends. He first addresses Ritchie and his laziness. As he is waiting outside Ritchie's house one day trying to determine what it is he needs to do for Ritchie, that Keith and Daryl tell him that he is trying too hard. They indicate he is too close to his friends to realize what it is they really need the most. Similarly, it is a homeless man who helps Ed to realize what it is that he must do for Marv.



part four: the music of hearts 7 - K

part four: the music of hearts 7 - K Summary

In chapter 7, Ed thinks back about his favorite messages. He admits to himself that he is afraid. After their next card game, Ed tells Marv that he needs his help, that he needs money. Ed is surprised when Marv tells him the money is not in a place where he can get to it quickly. Ed demands to know why Marv would do such a thing. Marv surprises him by getting back in the car then beginning to cry. Marv finally gets his car started and takes Ed to a weather-beaten shack where Suzanne Boyd used to live.

Marv tells Ed that the Boyds moved because Suzanne was pregnant with his baby. He wants the child to have something from him when it is older. He has the address where Suzanne lives with the child but hasn't tried to visit because a friend told him that Suzanne's father had said he would kill Marv if he came near Suzanne again. Ed offers to go with Marv to see Suzanne and the child.

In chapter 8, Ed drives Marv in his cab to see Marv's child. Marv finally works up the courage to knock on the door and walk in the house, but then comes running out about 30 seconds later being chased by Suzanne's father. Marv tries to talk to the man, but Henry Boyd insists he leave. Ed goes to collect Marv from where he is lying, bleeding in the yard. He sees Suzanne and a little girl standing in the doorway of the house. Ed stands up for his friend in front of the man telling him that what Marv has done in facing Henry Boyd is both a show of respect and decency. Meanwhile, Marv has walked toward the house. He and Suzanne are staring at one another.

In chapter 9, about a week later Marge at Vacant Taxis waves Ed down with a special trip. The pick up address is Cabramatta Road. When he arrives, Suzanne gets in the cab with her daughter. She introduces the little girl, Melinda Boyd, to Ed. He learns that Suzanne has a part time job. She hates her father and his attitude, and hates herself for not fighting back. Melinda, she says, is the best part of everything. Ed acknowledges Marv's hurt, but reassures Suzanne because she has chosen to introduce his daughter to him. She tells Ed that no one has ever stood up to her father the way that he did.

Suzanne asks Ed to drop them off at a playground before going to get Marv. Marv walks hesitantly onto the playground. They talk, and Marv shakes the little girl's hand. Marv pushes Melinda in a swing. Suzanne walks to stand with Ed and watch the father and daughter interact. The little girl grabs her father's hand as they walk back to Suzanne and Ed at the car.

In chapter 10, Marv visits Ed and hugs him so tightly that Ed can feel the joy inside him. Ed realizes he is finished with both Ritchie and Marv. All that is left is Audrey. He spends three evenings waiting and watching outside Audrey's apartment. He finally realizes that what he needs to do for Audrey is to allow her to love him if only for one time.



In chapter J, Marv returns to Ed's apartment and asks if he still needs the money that he asked for originally. Ed tells Marv that he never needed money and explains the cards he has been getting in the mail.

In chapter Q, Ed spends the night in the park across from Audrey's town house. In the morning, he hears a door slam and Simon's car start. He realizes that the time has come. He knocks on Audrey's door. He draws her out of the house and pushes play on the recorder. He dances with her in the front yard. Ed feels that Audrey let herself love him for the three minutes of the song.

In chapter K, Ed takes his radio and walks home. All of his messages have been delivered. He feels relieved and free. This feeling vanishes as he and the Doorman hear a latch open and then someone run off. There is one last envelope containing a card in his letterbox. The address on this final card is 26 Shipping Street, Ed's address.

part four: the music of hearts 7 - K Analysis

In this section Ed indicates that this is the end of Ed and Marv's trivial relationship. Although it may seem sad that it is the end of this relationship, this is a sign that both of them are growing. It is only through growing that trivial relationships die. But this death leads to a deeper relationship between the two of them. Both Ed and Marv have grown through this experience that they have had together. They, like the Rose brothers, have bonded together against a common "enemy" in the form of Suzanne Boyd's father.

Suzanne Boyd also grows in this section of the novel as she goes against her father's wishes and goes to introduce their daughter to Marv. She shares with Ed that she has never agreed with her father's opinion of the situation but she has been too afraid to not do as he wanted her to. She admits how much pain she has caused Marv for keeping their daughter away from him.

It is in this section that the reader finally learns the story of Marv's car and why he is so protective of him. Marv bought the car when Suzanne's father first took her out of town. He had planned to drive the car to pick up his girlfriend, but was scared by the threats that her father has made toward him. This is why Marv is so protective of his car. It represents to him his love for Suzanne and his desire to have her with him. The car also allows him to put his money in the bank for his child. If he bought a better car, it would take money away from his child.

It is also during this section that Ed reaches out to Audrey. Although his actions are simple and innocent, he shows that he loves her just for her. Not for any sexual reason, or her beauty. He dances with her in the morning in the yard. She wears her nightgown and has not yet gotten ready for the day. Even though, Ed believes she is beautiful.



part five: the joker

part five: the joker Summary

In the first chapter J, Ed looks at the joker and realizes he needs to go inside his house. He is surprised there is no one there. Three days later, Ed almost has a wreck at a roundabout. He feels as if the joker card is laughing at him.

In the second chapter J, Audrey visits Ed at his shack. He begs Audrey to tell him that she is the one who has been sending him the cards. Audrey tells him that as much as she wishes it were, it has not been her.

In the third chapter J, Ed finally gets the knock on the door that he has been expecting. The man at the door is carrying a briefcase that holds a wrapped lunch, an apple and an envelope. The man gives Ed the envelope. Ed asks who sent him. The man doesn't answer. Inside the envelope is a letter instructing him to go to the cemetery. Ed realizes it is the day before the one-year anniversary of his father's death. Although the man tells Ed he does not know who is behind the cards, Ed wonders if his father might have set all of this up before he died. He runs to the cemetery. At the cemetery, he is confronted by Daryl and Keith. The two tell him that they were employed to help him avoid a life like his father's, but it wasn't his father who hired them. They tell Ed they don't know who their employer is. They give him their last message; that he has a little longer to wait.

After a few days, Ed is waved down by a young man. The man wants to be taken to Ed's home address. When they arrive, Ed recognizes the man as the bank robber. His six months of jail time is up. The man instructs Ed to drive to each of the places where the cards have taken him. As they pull back up to Ed's house, the man pulls a small, flat mirror out of his pocket. He reminds Ed that at his trial, he told Ed to remember every time he looked at himself in a mirror, he was looking at a dead man. He holds the mirror up and asks him if he is looking at a dead man now. When Ed says that he was not looking at a dead man, the bank robber comments that what he did was all worth it.

In the fourth chapter J, Ed walks inside his house and finds a man there petting his dog. It is the man who has sent Ed all of the cards. The man has been watching Ed since he came to town about a year ago. He tells Ed that he killed Ed's father and also organized the bank robbery. He also told the man on Edgar Street to brutalize his wife. He was Daryl and Keith's boss as well as boss for the man who took Ed to the stones.

He explains to Ed that he did the things he did because Ed was the picture of an ordinary person. The man figured that if Ed could do the things the man asked him to do then anybody could do them. The man points to a folder containing everything that Ed has done during the past year. Ed wants the man to tell him what he is supposed to do next. The man tells him just to keep living. Ed wonders if he should write a book about his experiences, but figures that the man who sent him the cards has already done so.



Ed suggests that if he were to write a book he would start it with the line "The gunman is useless."

In the fifth chapter J, Audrey comes to Ed's house and asks if she can stay forever. They kiss. The Doorman joins them in the hallway, looking at them as if to say, "it's about time." He tells Audrey about everything that has happened to him in the last several days. He goes to the folder and looks for evidence that he and Audrey will be together. When he doesn't find anything, Audrey tells him that she believes this time belongs to them. As Ed is sitting with Audrey and the Doorman on his front porch, he realizes he is not the messenger, but instead the message.

part five: the joker Analysis

Although this part of the novel starts with Ed in high anxiety about the Joker card, it ends with everything turning out for the best for Ed. Ed is afraid because it is his address that is listed on the joker card. He does not know what he might learn about himself during this last assignment. Ed realizes that the lessons he has delivered to the other people he has dealt with have been for their own good, but that some have also been difficult for the people who received the messages to deal with. Ed is unsure how difficult his own lesson might be.

Also during this section of the novel, the author inserts an interesting twist in the story line. When Ed meets the person who has been orchestrating the cards and Ed's assignments, it turns out that this man is also the author of the book. In reality, it is the author of the book who gives the characters their livelihood and gives them their purpose. He orchestrates the actions of the characters in the book just as the man has orchestrated Ed's actions through the cards. Although it seems strange for an author to insert himself into the action of his own novel, Markus Zusak does it in a way that perfectly fits his own role in creating the novel.

In the final chapter of the book, Audrey and Ed finally get together. Audrey asks Ed permission to stay with Ed for good. She has finally realized that Ed is a good person and that it is not his intention to cause her any hurt. Also, since the narrative of the story is finished, Ed and Audrey are free to find their own way in life.



Characters

Ed Kennedy

Ed is the main character and narrator of the novel. At nineteen, he is an underaged taxi driver. He believes he will not do anything noteworthy with his life. He has a brother whom he believes is on the right track in life because he is studying to be a lawyer at a university. He also has two sisters, both whom have moved away from their town. Ed's mother is proud of the other three siblings, but never of Ed. Ed's father, a drunkard, died about six months ago. Ed adopted his father's dog, the Doorman, after his father died. Besides the dog, Ed lives alone. He has three friends, Marv, Ritchie and Audrey with whom he plays cards. Ed loves Audrey but because of her abusive childhood, has made up her mind not to love anyone.

Ed picks up a gun dropped by a bank robber and shoots at the man as he tries to get away. It is at this point that Ed receives the first playing card in the mail. This card, the Ace of Diamonds, has three addresses written on it. Ed gets the impression that he is supposed to do something to help the people on the card. After Marv completes the first card, then receives the other ace cards from the deck of cards until he has worked through 12 different assignments. Through these assignments, he has helped people including a variety of strangers, his mother, and his three best friends. The final card, the Joker, lists Ed's own address. During this time Ed meets the stranger who has been sending him the cards. This man has been watching Ed and had arranged for Ed's father to die. He wanted to challenge Ed to live a better life than that of his father. At the conclusion of the novel, Ed is surprised when Audrey comes to live with him and professes her love. Ed also realizes that his is not just the messenger, but also the message as he has shown his strange boss: that even an ordinary man can rise above himself and do great things.

Audrey O'Neill

Audrey O'Neill is the girl whom Ed loves. Audrey talked him into getting the job at Vacant Taxis even though he was underage. She works at the same company. Audrey often tells Ed that he is her best friend and that it is he who treats her best. Despite these feelings, however, Audrey refuses to date Ed but instead goes out with and sleeps with men with whom she does not love. Audrey frequently spends the night with Ed but there is no sexual activity between the two. Audrey tells Ed that she does not want them to have that type of relationship every time that Ed suggests it or makes a romantic move on her such as the time that he tries to kiss her. Ed believes that Audrey will not love him because she was treated cruelly by her family when she was a child. She believes that those who are supposed to love her will only hurt her.

Audrey is the person whom Ed talks with the most about the cards that he has been receiving and the assignments that he has been given. He gets the feeling that she



believes what he says about the cards. When Bernie tells Ed to come back to his theater and bring his girlfriend to watch another movie, Audrey is the girl whom Ed brings. Audrey holds Bernie and Ed's hands during the movie. Ed's job to help Audrey is to show her that he loves her if just for a short time. At the conclusion of the novel, Audrey comes to Ed and tells him that she wants to come and live with him permanently.

Marvin

Marvin "Marv" Harris is one of Ed's best friends. He has just turned 20. Marv still lives at home with his parents. The only thing that Marv seems to look forward to in life is the annual sledge game in which players play soccer, barefoot, with no sort of protection such as shin guards.

When Suzanne Boyd, Marv's girlfriend, and her family left town about three years prior to the novel, Marv bought a light blue Ford Falcon car with which he has become obsessed. He is also tight with his money and has more than \$40,000 in the bank. When Ed works on a card with Marv's name on it, Ed learns that Marv had unintentionally gotten Suzanna pregnant, causing her family to take her out of town. Suzanna's father has threatened Marv not to come near his daughter again. Marv has been saving money for his child so that he can be of some help to it. Ed takes Marv to see the little girl.

Dave

Dave "Ritchie" Sanchez is another of Ed's friends. He lives with his parents and has no job. He spends his days betting and drinking. Dave's friends call him Ritchie because of a tattoo he has that is supposed to be of Jimi Hendrix. His friends say the tattoo looks more like Richard Pryor so they call him Ritchie.

Ed's job with Ritchie is to convince Ritchie that he is utterly useless. Once he has convinced Ritchie of his uselessness, Ed encourages his friend to get a job. While they are talking, Ritchie tells Ed that he once thought he had chronic fatigue syndrome, but has since decided that he is just lazy.

The Doorman

The Doorman is a 17-year-old Rottweiler and German Shepherd mix who lives with Ed. Ed took the dog to live with him after his father died and his mother began complaining about the dog using the bathroom near her clothesline. He gets his name because he likes to sit next to the door. Everyone who comes close to the dog complains about his smell. Ed has done several things to make the dog smell better including bathing him, using deodorant on him and spraying him with perfume. Ed and the dog have conversations that only the two of them understand. Ed also teaches the dog to enjoy coffee. At the conclusion of the novel, Ed refers to his dog as being a wise sage.



The Gunman

The gunman is hired by author Markus Zusak, who is also a character in the book, to hold up a bank and then get arrested. During his trial, when Ed is testifying against the robber, the robber tells Ed that he is a dead man. At the conclusion of the novel, the gunman visits Ed and tells him what he meant by the statement that he was a dead man. The gunman did not mean that he was planning to Ed, but that the unmotivated, useless man that Ed was becoming would be dead. The gunman is pleased that Ed has transformed into a new person because it means his stint in jail was not meaningless.

Markus Zusak

At the conclusion of the novel, Markus Zusak reveals himself as a character in his own book. He is the man who orchestrated Ed's strange adventure. He "hired" all of the men who interacted with Ed along with way, leaving him cards, guns and the motivation he needed to go on. When Zusak appears in the next to last chapter, he gives Ed a folder of information detailing everything that has happened in the novel. It is all written out. Ed writes that he suspects the man will write a book about what has happened to Ed.

Tommy, Leigh and Katherine

Tommy, Leigh, and Katherine are Ed's siblings. Ed is aware that his mother is proud of all her children except Ed. All of the other children have moved out of town, leaving only Ed to deal with his mother on a day-to-day basis.

Beverly Anne Kennedy

Beverly Anne Kennedy is Ed's mother. She says that she is proud of all of her children with the exception of Ed. She shows a glimmer of pride in her son when he helps catch the bank robber, but loses it quickly. After Ed sees his mother on a date with a strange man, Ed asks his mother why she does not like him. She tells him that it is because he reminds her of his father. Ed's mother was cheating on his father even before he died. Ed has the opportunity to tell his mother that it is not a change of location that makes a difference, but a person changing his mind and deciding to be someone better.

Milla Johnson

Milla Johnson is the eighty-two year old woman who lives at 15 Harrison St. She is one of the names on the Ace of Diamonds card. Ed realizes that it is his responsibility to help ease Milla's loneliness. Milla believes that Ed is her former husband, Jimmy.



Sophie

Sophie is the beautiful girl who runs better barefoot than with shoes on. Ed helps to give her the self-confidence that she needs to run with bare feet in a track meet. Although Sophie still does not win the race, she is happy with herself because she has finally run her best.

Jerry Boston

Jerry Boston is Ed's boss at the taxi company. Ed describes him as a particularly obese man with greasy hair combed over his bald spot. Boston allows Ed to use his cab overnight believing it is to help Ed's brother move when in reality it is to drive the drunk man to the Cathedral so Ed can shoot him. Jerry also owns the shack in which Ed lives.

Daryl and Keith

Daryl and Keith are two of the men sent to Ed to deliver cards and letters to him from their boss.

Father Thomas O'Reilly

Thomas O'Reilly is the name of one of the people whose name is carved in the stones of home. He is the minister of a small, dying church in one of the poor sections of town. Ed's gift to father O'Reilly is to fill his church up.

Jay

Jay is the boy who offers to watch the Doorman while Ed plays in the sledge game. When Ed goes to get his dog, Jay and the dog are gone. He later spots Jay and the Doorman returning from getting a snack. A strange woman is talking to Jay. When Ed asks Jay what the woman was doing, Jay says the woman gave him a card to give to the man who owned the dog. Ed asks for the card, but Jay says that he is the one who owns the dog. Jay cons Ed into paying him \$20 for his own dog and the card.

Gregor Kennedy

Gregor Kennedy is Ed's father. At the end of the book, it is learned that the man who orchestrated Ed's strange adventure also arranged to have Ed's father killed. Ed admits his father was a drunk, but also indicates he was a good man, kind, generous and gentle. When Ed learns that his mother has been having an affair, he thinks of his father and believes that he deserved better than that. Ed's mother tells him that she hates him because he reminds her of his father. Ed's father had promised that they would leave



the place in which they lived someday, but they never did. In the same way, Ed also seems to have no desire to leave his hometown.

Bernie Price

Bernie Price is the owner of the old cinema on Bell Street. After Bernie falls asleep during the movie he is showing for Ed and forgets the reel change, he insists that Ed come back with his girl and watch a free movie. It is in Bernie's theater that Ed receives the Ace of Hearts. Bernie also helps Ed to decode the clues in the movie titles listed on this card.

Suzanne Boyd

Suzanne is Marv's old girlfriend. Her parents take her out of town when she becomes pregnant with Marv's baby. After Marv tries to visit and make amends with the family, Suzanne calls Ed to pick her up in his cab so Marv can see his daughter. She tells Ed she is ashamed of the way that she has treated Marv. She hates her father and what he has done, but doesn't have the courage to go against his wishes.

Henry Boyd

Henry Boyd is Suzanne Boyd's father. The man is described as not being a big man, but a powerful man. He threatens to kill Marv if he ever sees him again after Suzanne becomes pregnant. Even when Marv returns to see the child and let Suzanne know he's been saving money for the child, Henry Boyd still beats Ed up and tells him not to return.

Melinda Boyd

Melinda is Suzanne and Marv's daughter.

The Tatupu Family

The Tatupu Family is the family for whom Ed buys a string of new Christmas lights because their old string is faded and most of the bulbs don't work. This family lives at one of the addresses listed on the Ace of Spades card.

The Man at 45 Edgar Street

Ed believes he has run this man, who repeatedly raped and victimized his wife, out of town by threatening him with a gun. In reality, however, the man who orchestrated the



whole adventure with the cards told the man to brutalize his wife so that Ed would think that she needed saving.

The Rose Brothers

These brothers, Gavin and Daniel, fight with each other constantly. It is Gavin whose name appears on the stones of home. Ed helps Gavin by giving he and his brother the opportunity to stand up for each other.

Angie Carusso

Angie Carusso is the third name listed on the stones of home. This single mother always buys ice cream for her children on her payday, but never any for herself. Ed touches her life by buying her an ice cream cone.



Objects/Places

The Bank

A bank is the opening setting for the book. It is this bank that a less than apt gunman tries to hold up, but his plan is thwarted with the help of Ed.

Falcon

Marvin's car, a light blue clunker, doesn't even have a hand brake and often won't start. The gunman tries to use this car as his getaway car but it won't start. Marv is continuously kidded by his friends as a result of this car, but he refuses to buy a better one. It was the one Marv bought when he planned to go and get Suzanne.

Annoyance

Annoyance is a card game played by Ed and his friends.

Vacant Taxis

Vacant Taxis is the taxi service for which Ed and Audrey work.

Norsca Spray

Norsca spray is a spray that Ed uses on the Doorman to try to make him smell better. Ed says the spray only makes the dog smell like a Scandinavian toilet.

A Small Envelope

Ed gets this small envelope in the mail one day. Inside this envelope is his first message.

Ace of Diamonds

This playing card, the Ace of Diamonds, is inside a small envelope that Ed receives in the mail. This card has three addresses written on it.

Subpoena

Ed gets a subpoena calling him to testify in court against the bank robber.



Blend 43

Blend 43 is the type of coffee that Ed drinks. He gives some to the Doorman one night and the dog gets hooked. The dog won't drink the coffee unless it has sugar in it, as Ed puts in his coffee.

Coffee Table

It is over this coffee table that Ed's mother gets so angry at him about because he forgets to deliver it. Ed does finally deliver it but learns that his mother has swapped the table for another one at his brother's suggestion.

Spiked Shoes

Sophie mentions that she thought the spiked shoes she wore for her track meet were supposed to bring good luck. When Ed looks at them he notices they are worn out. He believes she deserves better.

Gun with One Bullet

Ed's mysterious caller leaves this gun with only one bullet in it in Ed's letter box to help him take care of the cruel, violent man on Edgar Street.

A Flask of Doped Vodka

Ed gives this drink to the man who lives at 45 Edgar Street in order to drive him to the Cathedral to shoot him.

The Cathedral

The Cathedral is a secluded rock summit of a mountain where Ed takes the man who lives at 45 Edgar Street to shoot him.

Annual Sledge Game

The annual sledge game is a soccer game that is played with no shoes and no protection. It is this game that Marv looks forward to every year.



Meat Pies

Meat pies are what Ed smells in his house on the day that he is visited by the two men in balaclavas

The Ace of Clubs

The Ace of Clubs is the second card that Ed gets. This one has the words "say a prayer at the stones of home" on it.

Henry Street

Henry Street is where Father O'Reilly lives.

Free Beer

A party with free beer is the way that Ed decides to get people into Father O'Reilly's church.

Graham Greene, Morris West and Sylvia Plath

These names are the names of three writers who are listed on the Ace of Spades playing card that Ed receives.

Christmas Lights

It is a string of worn out, faded Christmas lights that Ed feels called to replace at the Tatupu house at 114 Glory Road.

Small Dark Stone with a Pattern on it Like a Cross

The Tatupu family gives this stone to Ed as a way to remember them. Lua tells Ed the stone is for luck.

Melusso's

Melusso's is the Italian restaurant where Ed sees his mother dining with a man whom she has been seeing since before Ed's father died.



The Suitcase, Cat Ballou, Roman Holiday

These are titles of movies written on the Ace of Hearts.

Christmas Cards

Ed gives out Christmas cards for the first time this year. Instead of bought cards, he uses the ace cards from a couple of packs of playing cards.

17 Cabramatta Drive

This is the address of the house where Suzanne Boyd, her child and her father live.

Small, Flat Mirror

This small, flat mirror is what the bank robber shows Ed when he asks Ed if he is still a dead man.

The Stones of Home

These are some stones from which Ed and his brother used to fish when they were younger.

The Joker

This card has Ed's home address listed on it.



Themes

Playing Cards

Playing cards and card games one theme that is very prominent in this novel. The novel is structured after a pack of playing cards. There are five sections. Each of the first four sections corresponds to one of the four suits of cards: diamonds, spades, clubs and hearts. The fifth section of the novel represents the jokers in a deck of cards. Each of the first four sections of the novel has 13 chapters in them, corresponding to the number of cards in each suit. The chapters are notated based on the names of the cards. For instance, there is no chapter one, but instead a chapter A, for ace, the first card in the suit and so on.

One of the favorite pastimes of the group of four friends is playing cards. They play a game called Annoyance. Although playing cards can be a fun way to pass the time, it doesn't really accomplish anything. It is a very trivial activity. The trivial relationship between these four friends develops into deeper relationships as Ed encourages them to grow and face their faults through the cards that he receives. At one point in his experience with the cards, Ed feels as if someone is playing with his life just as if someone would play with a pack of cards. He indicates that his life is not a card game.

Ed receives his assignments through the playing cards. As he gets each card, he imagines having all four aces, which card players recognize as the perfect hand, lined up in his drawer. Since his friends play cards often, Ed relates best to cards as a medium for expression. Another aspect that adds to the theme of the cards include Ed sending aces as Christmas cards.

Personal Growth

Growth as a person is another major theme of this novel. At the beginning of the novel, Ed only dreams of being able to complete some feat that would make him noteworthy. He believes that he will not do anything important with his life. He will drive a taxi and live alone in a shack with his dog for the rest of his life.

The cards, however, challenge Ed to move beyond what he felt he was capable of. Although he may not be doing things that are important to everyone in his town, the things that he does are important to the people whom he helps. He is changing lives. Even the man who sends Ed on his strange missions is impressed how well Ed does in his assignments. The man indicates that he has learned that even a man who is the picture of ordinary can outlive his expectations.

In addition to his own personal growth, Ed also challenges those around him to move beyond themselves. For instance, he helps Ritchie to realize how useless his life is. Ritchie finally understands that he must get a job and contribute to life. Ed also helps Marv to work up the courage that he needs to stand up to Henry Boyd. Although this



interaction doesn't seem to have gone well at first, it gives Suzanne the courage she needs to go against her father's wishes and introduce their daughter to Marv. Finally, Ed gives Audrey the courage that she needs to give in to Ed's love for her. Ed had always believed that Audrey was afraid to let anyone love her because she had been hurt before by her family. At the conclusion of the novel, Audrey tells Ed that she wants to stay with him, forever.

Family Relationships

Relations between family members, particularly the relationship between Ed and his mother is another major theme in the novel. Ed's mother tells people that Ed is the only one of her children of whom she is not proud. She treats Ed badly, seeming at times as if she wanted to be rid of him when he comes to visit. Ed reasons that she should care for him more because he is the only child who has stayed near her, but it turns out that his mother's feelings are just the opposite in reality. Ed learns in the course of the novel that his mother hates him because he reminds her of his father. Ed cannot completely understand why this comparison is bad, but soon realizes that his mother had hoped all her life that her husband would take her out of the town in which they lived. She seemed to believe this would be the answer to her problems. Ed lets her know that changing her location without changing her attitude would not have made any difference in her problems, they would only have followed her wherever she went.

Ed's relationship with his mother is contrasted with his relationship with Milla. Milla believes that Ed is her former husband Jimmy. He is impressed by the way that Milla treats him with love and respect. The two enjoy spending time together. It impresses Ed that Milla is concerned that she treated Jimmy as she should have. Milla is more worried about what she can do for others than what others can do for her. Her attitude toward life is completely opposite that of Ed's mother.



Style

Point of View

This novel is written in the first-person point of view from Ed's perspective. Ed is also the main character of the novel. It is to Ed that the cards are sent and he who carries out the assignments as outlined on the cards. Ed's narration is reliable to the point that things involve him. When things happen that involve other people, Ed is only able to interpret other people's actions based on his own opinions and the knowledge that he has of the situation. He has no insight into what other characters are thinking or their motivations besides what these characters might tell him. Time passes in a linear manner. There are no large patches of missing time or any periods of time that seem to move faster than others.

The story is told through exposition with patches of dialogue interspersed as characters interact with one another. The exposition is mainly comprised of Ed's thoughts as he tries to work his way through the reasoning that is behind the cards being sent to him. Ed also spends much time by himself as he tries to address the issues sent to him on the cards. He doesn't share much information about the cards with anyone. Note also that there is "dialogue" between Ed and the Doorman. The focus of the dialogue and exposition of the novel is on Ed because he is the only one, apart from the author, who knows everything about the cards and his assignments.

Setting

This story appears to be set in a poor section of a town either in New Zealand or Australia. Since the text in the book refers to it as being spring in October and hot during the Christmas season, one is able to deduce that the action takes place in one of these Southern Hemisphere continents. Many of the homes that are noted in the book are shacks or inexpensive homes that obviously need repair. People seem to work very hard, but have very little. Most of the people whom Ed helps have little money such as the Tatupu family and Angie Carusso.

The action of the book starts shortly after the death of Ed's father. Ed receives most of the cards during the six-month period when the bank robber is in jail, just before the one-year anniversary of Ed's father's death. He receives only one card, the Ace of Diamonds, shortly before he is called to testify at the gunman's trial. Therefore, Ed is able to complete his assignments within a six-month period.

Important settings include the stones of home where Ed finds the three names carved in the rocks as well as Bernie Price's theater where Ed receives the card the Ace of Hearts. Specific settings in the novel include Ed's shack, his mother's house, Audrey's apartment and Milla's house. Other locations mentioned in the novel include Father O'Reilly's church, the track field where Sophie runs, Ed's father's grave, Suzanne's

house, and a local park where Angie Carusso's kids play. A bank, where a bungled bank robbery takes place, is the opening setting for this book.

Language and Meaning

One of the aspects of this book that makes it so interesting to read is the personification and other literary techniques that Markus Zusak uses in his writing. Most interesting is the personification. For instance, when Ed receives the first card, he indicates there is an "eeriness slipping over my hands." The use of this phrase indicates that the eeriness has a life of its own and is overtaking Ed. In another section of the book it is written that Ed believes "the mornings clap their hands" to wake him up. In addition to referring to inanimate objects as having feelings and emotions the author also uses metaphor to compare animate objects to inanimate ones. For instance, Ed says that his clients, those who ride in his cab, are headaches.

The novel is also written in the language of the Australian. There are several words that are mostly slang terms that will be unfamiliar to American readers. These words include words like *sap*, referring to a favorable person; and *shirty*, which indicates a smart aleck. Also in the novel, the Australian term *letterbox* is used to refer to what readers in America would refer to as the mail box.

Structure

One of the most unique features of this book is its structure. The structure follows one of the themes of the book; that of playing cards. The novel has five sections. Each of the first four sections of the novel corresponds to the four suits of a deck of cards while the fifth section represents the jokers. Just as each deck of cards has thirteen cards in each suit, each section of the novel has thirteen chapters. These chapters are titled, or numbered, following the order of cards in a suit. For instance, Chapter A represents the ace; followed by the numbered cards two through ten; Chapter J represents the jack; Chapter Q, the queen; and Chapter K, the king.

The events of the novel are linear in nature with no flashbacks to give background information. It is through characters' conversations or thoughts that needed background information is given. The novel is written in a way that it is cyclical in nature. At the conclusion of the novel, the author steps into the action of the book as the man who orchestrated Ed's adventure. Ed points back to the beginning of the novel as he thinks to himself that he should write a book about the adventure he has had. He says that if he did write a book, he would begin it with the phrase; "The gunman is useless." This is the same phrase with which the author chose to start the book.



Quotes

"There is something in me that advises me to throw it out - to throw it in the bin and forget about it. Yet, I also feel pangs of guilt even for thinking of discarding it like that" (Part one, Chapter 3, p. 26).

"It's like I've been chosen. But chosen for what? I ask.
The answer is quite simple:
To care" (Part one, Chapter 5, p. 41).

"The message this time is to soothe this old lady's loneliness" (Part one, Chapter 7, p. 53).

"I realize that for every good message, there will always be one that will agonize me" (Part one, Chapter 9, p. 68).

"She knew all along of course that I was lying about throwing out the diamonds. No one in their right mind would throw diamonds out, would they? They're valuable. If anything, they need protecting" (Part one, Chapter 10, p. 70).

"No, I'm not a saint, Sophie. I'm just another stupid human" (Part one, chapter J, p. 74).

"It's three in the morning, I'm playing The Proclaimers too loud for their own bloody good, and I'm pretty sure I have to go and kill someone. My life has really become worthwhile, hasn't it?" (Part one, Chapter K, p. 81).

"I don't care that I'm a messenger anymore. The guilt of it handles me. I shrug it off but it always climbs back on. No one said this was going to be easy." (Part two, Chapter A, p. 95).

"The Ace of Spades scares me — always has." (Part two, Chapter A, p. 99).

"We all have our duties here. We all suffer. We all endure our setbacks for the greater good of mankind." (Part two, Chapter 2, p. 107).

"For a moment, I imagine a full hand of aces in that drawer, fanned out as a player would hold them in a game. I never thought I wouldn't want four aces. In a card game, you pray for a hand like that. My life is not a card game." (Part two, Chapter 4, p. 116).

"'You know, they say that there are countless saints who have nothing to do with church and almost no knowledge of God. But they say God walks with these people without them ever knowing it.' His eyes are inside me now, followed by the words. 'You're one of those people, Ed. It's an honor to know you.'" (Part two, Chapter 8, p. 156).



"I want to tell them, but I realize that all I do is deliver the message. I don't decipher it or make sense of it for them. They need to do that themselves." (Part two, Chapter Q, p. 177).

"I feel bad because all I ever seem to do is walk away from Marv these days. Tonight, he allows me some room. I think he finally understands that what's important to him doesn't have to be to me." (Part three, Chapter 3, p. 201).

"Now I have to dig.
This is spades, so I have to dig." (Part three, Chapter 3, p. 214).

"It's not a big thing, but I guess it's true — big things are often just small things that are noticed." (Part three, Chapter 4, p. 220).

"He'd work his guts out, but it was never enough. Remember the coffee table incident? Well, my father had to put up with that every day." (Part three, Chapter 9, p. 240).

"For the first time, a message has touched my life in some way." (Part three, Chapter Q, p. 247).

"'They do it because they can.' The voice is tired, but true. Determined. 'It's all been worked out long ago. At least a year.'" (Part three, Chapter Q, p. 258).

"I also fear that nothing really ends at the end. Things just keep going as long as memory can wield its ax, always finding a soft part in your mind to cut through and enter." (Part four, Chapter A, p. 267).

"It feels strange delivering the cards to these people. They'll never really know what it means and in some cases will have no idea who in the hell this Ed person is" (Part four, Chapter A, p. 268).

"I got hearts, and for some reason, this feels the most dangerous of them all. People die of broken hearts. They have heart attacks. And it's the heart that hurts most when things go wrong and fall apart" (Part four, Chapter A, p. 270).

"I want words at my funeral.
But I guess that means you need life in your life" (Part four, Chapter 2, p. 278).

"I've come so far since the holdup. I've plowed through eleven messages, and this is the last of them. The most important one" (Part four, Chapter 10, p. 330).

"Crowds of questions stream through me like lines of people exiting a soccer ground or a concert. They push and shove and trip. Some make their way around. Some remain in their seats, waiting for their opportunity" (Part five, Chapter J, p. 347).



"He went to jail for those people.
He went to jail for me, and now he walks away with a few last words" (Part five, Chapter J, p. 351).

"And if a guy like you can stand up and do what you did for all those people, well,
maybe everyone can" (Part five, Chapter J, p. 353).

"The Doorman looks at both of us. He is the sage. He is the wisdom. He says, About
bloody time, you two" (Part five, Chapter J, p. 356).

"I'm not the messenger at all.
I'm the message" (Part five, Chapter J, p. 35).



Topics for Discussion

What is the connection between the cards that Ed receives and the people that he helps through those missions?

Describe the way that Ed's mother treats him. Why does she treat him this way? Does she treat her other children differently?

What is the role of the bank robber in the novel?

What is the role of the Doorman in the novel? What does his smell represent?

What is the message that Ed is intended to share? How does he make the transition from the messenger to the message?

Discuss the structure of the novel. How is it unique?

Discuss cards and card playing as a theme in the novel.

Discuss the relationship between Audrey and Ed. How does it progress through the novel? Why does Audrey not want to have a relationship with Ed at first?

Why is the significance of Marv's car? What role does it play in the novel?

What is the significance of the bungled bank robbery? How does it lead the way for the events of the novel to unfold?

Is the man who sends Ed the cards good or bad? Consider all of the things that he did to manipulate Ed when discussing this topic.

Why does Ed get a gun with only one bullet in it to kill the Edgar Street man? What is the significance of this?

Why does the man who sends Ed the cards give him clues in the form of riddles? Why is it important that Ed figure out what he needs to do?