

# Monument 14 Study Guide

## Monument 14 by Emmy Laybourne

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## Plot Summary

Monument 14 is the debut fiction novel by author Emmy Laybourne. In this novel, Dean Grieber is a sixteen-year-old boy in high school living in Monument, Colorado in 2024. When a megatsunami strikes some of the major cities along the east coast, the megastorm also creates weather phenomena, such as a major hailstorm that wreaks havoc on Monument.

The hailstorm causes the two different buses that Dean and his brother Alex are riding on to school to crash into each other. When Mrs. Wooly, one of the bus driver, saves the living students from both buses, she drives the school bus into a local Greenway store. When Mrs. Wooly goes for help, the students she leaves behind, ranging from eight years old to high school students, take refuge inside the store.

The hailstorm also knocks out the Network, which is the way residents watch televisions, surf the net, and track each other. The local nuclear chemical plant is also leaking, which causes nuclear contamination, to which residents are having varying reactions according to their blood types, that range from blistering to turning into raving maniacs that attack and kills people. Over the course of the twelve days, the kids form their own form of a society inside the Greenway. They use the food, housewares, and other goods and supplies inside of the store in order to survive. They learn how to operate as a group, even electing a leader to be in charge until Mrs. Wooly returns with help.

When two adults, Mr. Appleton and Robbie, arrive saying Mrs. Wooly sent them to check on the children, the group learns what is happening in Monument and the world for the first time from first-hand accounts, rather than the news footage that they have been able to pick up on one of the standard televisions left inside the store. When the group learns that they can escape to Alaska if they can make it to the Denver airport, they decide to drive the school bus there. Dean and Astrid, along with Dean's twin neighbors, elect to stay behind in the store because Astrid is pregnant.



# Chapters 1 and 2

## Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Dean rushes to catch the bus. He mentions that if he knew it would be the last time he saw his mom, he would have stopped to hug her. Dean is on one school bus, while his brother Alex is riding another school bus to school when it starts to hail. The hail is so big that it causes the bus to have an accident and flip over on its side.

The other bus, driven by Mrs. Wooly, goes hurtling past them and crashes into Greenway store. She backs up the bus and rescues the six students on Dean's bus that are still alive, which is Dean, Jake, Brayden, Astrid, Niko and Josie. Josie has a bad head injury. There are also some elementary school children alive from Mrs. Wooly's bus. One of the students includes Dean's brother Alex.

Mrs. Wooly gets the children out of the bus and into the store. They gather some medical supplies from the store shelves so she can mend their injuries. She also tells some of the children to get a change of clothes. Astrid says she can make pizza for lunch at the snack bar because she worked there the previous summer. Because Josie is so badly injured, Mrs. Wooly leaves the older children in charge while she walks to the emergency room to retrieve medical help.

## Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Dean's statement about seeing his mom for the last time as he runs to catch his school bus, foreshadows that something bad happens to him while he is on the bus. Additionally, something must happen to the rest of his family that prohibits him from seeing them again. Dean also mentions that all of the kids are taking the bus to school because it is the law since the gas shortage began. This indicates that there is some kind of war or governmental issue preventing people from buying gas.

Dean also describes they also use minitabs. When the network goes down after the hailstorm, the children get very upset because the government always says that the network is infallible. The children realize that nobody will know where they are since the network is down, so the inference is that something or someone is taking over the government through the network.



# Chapters 3 and 4

## Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

The older kids try to entertain and distract the younger kids by serving them pizza and slushies. Dean has his second one-sentence conversation with Astrid. The kids wander over to the electronics department, where the TVs are picking up a signal since the minitabs and bigtabs are not. They see a news story about a volcanic eruption that has caused a megatsunami, which wiped out cities such as New York, Miami, Charleston and Boston along the east coast. The eruption also caused a weather phenomenon across the Rockies, which is where Monument, the town where the characters live is.

The three gates that close off the front of the store start to shut. One of the kids tries to stop it with a shopping cart, but it does not work. The kids are trapped in the store and the rest of the world is shut out of the store.

The next morning, the kids are awakened by a foreshock, which is the precursor to the 8.2 earthquake they are about to experience. The kids run to hide under the bolted down tables inside of the Pizza Shack.

After the earthquake and the aftershocks, the store is left a wreck. The kids return to the media department, where they uncover one working TV. The news report is about the unprecedented earthquake. The breaking news story is that the chemical weapons plant, NORAD, has a leak. The kids scramble to seal off the doors of the store with shower curtains and duct tape to prevent chemical weapon exposure. When the AC unit kicks on they realize that they might be contaminated from the outside air that the AC unit is pulling in to cool off the store.

## Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

The older children understand what has caused the hailstorm in Monument. The younger children do not understand why they are trapped inside of the store and that numerous people across the nation are casualties of the eruption and the weather issues. There is foreshadowing that the children in Greenway will become some of the sole survivors in the country.

As some of the sole survivors, they will have to determine a way to stay alive and to escape the store. When they do so, they will also be responsible for helping to repopulate the Earth as they grow older. Right now, the group represents a form of surrogate family. They have to learn how to live and work together in order to survive.

When NORAD experiences a leak, it suggests that a nuclear fallout is eminent. Monument will seem as if it has been hit by a nuclear war, having to deal with contamination and the issues nuclear contamination causes.



# Chapters 5 and 6

## Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

Niko, Alex, Brayden, and Jake locate the storeroom. They start pushing icons on the screen to shut off the AC unit. Instead, the AC starts blowing the air harder. They decide they have to shut the unit off manually. When they see the hatch in the roof is open, they conclude that Sahalia, a girl Alex's age that was whining about leaving, escaped through the hatch.

When they climb onto the roof, they find Sahalia sitting there looking out at the black cloud on the horizon from NORAD. They also find that the vent ducts to the AC units are torn from the hail so they are going to have to seal off the vents. Niko sends Sahalia to retrieve a sledgehammer so he can pound the vents shut.

As Niko is hammering the vents, the black cloud is moving closer. An eerie green color is also forming. Dean's throat starts to burn and his skin starts to itch. As he retrieves the gas masks for them to wear, Dean tries to attack Niko but Alex drags Dean back through the hatch and Jake tackles Dean. When Niko is done hammering the vents shut, they all return inside of the building.

Niko sends Alex to get rope to tie Dean up. Dean tries to speak but he cannot. Brayden starts flipping out, talking about the smoke coming off Dean as being smoke from hell. Niko's skin breaks out with blisters. Niko sends Sahalia to retrieve Benadryl for him and a change of clothes for all of them. They wash with spring water from bottles and antibacterial soap. They also change their clothes because they believe they have been exposed to contamination.

When they all return to the store, they explain to Astrid how each of them reacted differently to the contamination. Dean returns to normal and cleans up the scratches and bite mark he caused on Alex when Dean went crazy.

Someone outside starts rattling the gates covering the front doors of the store. The man is trying to get the children to open the store because he is hungry. The older children hear a funny tone in the man's voice, so they try to distract the children after march them singing into the cookie aisle.

## Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

The black cloud and eerie green color indicate nuclear contamination. This also explains the burning in Dean's throat, his itchy skin, and irrational behavior. He has been exposed to nuclear radiation and contamination. In fact, all of the boys has been exposed to nuclear contamination. Whatever the agent is reacts differently in different people, although it is unclear at which human trait effects the reaction to the agent.



# Chapters 7 and 8

## Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

The newscaster on the TV says that an agent from NORAD is contaminating humans. The reactions the humans have vary according to their blood type. This explains why each of the boys reacted differently to the exposure. It also explains why the man trying to get inside of the store sounded deranged.

The boys start to talk about cleaning up the store and taking inventory of what they have. This sends Astrid into a fit because they are not planning on how to get out of the store to check on their families. Jake comforts Astrid as she cries.

Brayden starts taunting Dean for writing about all of them in his journal. Jake commands Brayden to stop. When screaming noises come from the bathroom, where Astrid is with the little kids, the boys walk into chaos. Astrid is choking Batiste, Chloe is attacking one of the other children and the McKinley twins are hallucinating. They realize the water is contaminated. When they try to tie up Astrid, she runs away into the store. They are performing CPR on Batiste because he is not breathing.

When Brayden taunts Dean again, Dean bites him but does not remember doing it. Dean wakes up later tied up. He convinces Chloe to get Alex, who unties Dean while telling him how cool it was that Dean bit Brayden on the scalp. Dean sees Batiste lying in his sleeping bag in a catatonic state, so Dean gets some warm clothes to dress Batiste in and dresses him.

The rest of the day, they try to carry on as normal. Dean tries to make dinner using the industrial ovens in the Pizza Shack. The little kids start wearing pull-ups so they do not have to go back into the bathroom. The older kids make a bathroom out of chairs and garbage bags in the baby aisle, which they later call the Dump. Occasionally, the bags are knotted and stuffed into plastic bins.

## Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

The children inside of the store are building their own world in which to live. They know that the nuclear contamination is turning the outside world into mayhem, which makes the inside environment of the store the safest place for them to be in the meantime. The foreshadowing is, however, that either they run out of supplies or the external world breaches their internal world, which disrupts their safety and security.

Dean reveals that he is sharing unfolding events to the reader as they happen.





# Chapters 9 and 10

## Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

On the third morning in the store, Batiste suggests to Dean that they set up a kitchen from items in the aisles. They do and then Dean sends the kids off to find out from Jake what the plan is for the day.

The kids spend the rest of the day playing games and playing with toys. Niko figures out how to use the pizza ovens so he makes pizza for everyone. Sahalia, Brayden and Jake get drunk. When Niko and Jake start fighting, the little kids start crying and wailing. Josie, who has not spoken since the accident, uses an air horn to stop the chaos. She says they are going to have a ceremony to honor the dead and then elect someone to be in charge until Mrs. Wooly returns.

Josie takes charge of the little kids. Josie cleans them up, puts them in new pajamas and sleeping bags. She also cleans herself up, changes her head bandage and her clothes for the first time too. Dean finds her telling the little kids about how when Mrs. Wooly returns that she will help get them all safely home.

Josie asks Dean to write something for the ceremony the following day. Dean notices that Niko looks at Josie as if he is glad Josie is feeling better and as if Niko has romantic feelings toward Josie.

## Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Ironically, it is Josie that takes on a leadership role in the group and formulates a plan for them to get through the rest of the time until they are rescued. Josie has replaced Astrid as the caregiver for the younger children. While Astrid is more of a protector and a realist, Josie is painting a rosier picture for the children than what is likely the reality of the situation.



# Chapters 11 and 12

## Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

Josie sets up the ceremony in the bath section of the store. All of the kids attend, but Astrid still does not show up. She has been missing for the last twenty-four hours, since the incident in the bathroom with Batiste. Sahalia plays the guitar and sings a song. Dean reads his poem.

They have pizza again for lunch. The little kids suggest that they can help Dean prepare the meals, so he agrees to choose a new helper each day and that the helper can pick what they eat. It is time for the election, but Jake and Brayden are missing.

Jake and Brayden make an entrance as football players, which is part of Jake's election speech. Niko gives his speech and then they hold the election. Josie announces that it was a close race but that the winner is Niko. Jake shakes Niko's hand and then he and Brayden leave the group to go get drunk.

## Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

The kids are doing things inside of the store that they would not normally do. Dean normally would not read what he writes in front of anyone, but also under the circumstances, not only does he want to read the poem, but also he even wants Astrid to hear it. The ceremony also puts the situation in perspective for the kids. They realize for the first time just how dire their situation is.



# Chapters 13 and 14

## Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

Niko wakes Dean up early the next morning to cook breakfast so they can start implementing Niko's plan. Ulysses reports for his helper duty and helps Dean make huevos rancheros. Niko explains the cleanup and restocking plan to the children and then sends them off for their first three-hour shift. They break for lunch, and then return for another three-hour shift. Then they have free time and dinner. Jake and Brayden do not participate, but drink beer and play laser tag in the sports aisle instead. Astrid is still missing, but Dean leaves a dinner plate covered with foil out for her.

The next day, Batiste is Dean's helper. Batiste turns out to be an amazing cook, especially for an eight year old, because he learned to cook at church camp. Josie is working on turning the dressing rooms into living quarters for them. Jake and Brayden return to the group to eat with them.

Niko asks Jake to be the Head of Security and Jake says he will think about it. Brayden volunteers to help Josie because he has experience framing houses from a summer job.

## Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

Niko is applying the survival skills he learned in Boy Scouts to their current situation. Niko's philosophy is also that children need structure and order, which is another reason that he is teaching the kids about cleaning up the store and returning it to its original order, prior to the hailstorm and the nuclear chemical leak.

Each kid seems to be bringing their knowledge and experience to the group. They are starting to form a society within the store just as societies and cultures can typically form in a normal world.



# Chapters 15 and 16

## Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

Brayden and Josie finish the living area and bedrooms. They give everyone a tour. Dean notices that Jake and Brayden are now eating with Josie. Every time one of them touches Josie or says her name, Dean can see Niko flinch.

After dinner, Dean overhears Astrid laughing in one of the aisles. He watches as she eats the dinner plate he left for her and she talks to Jake. Astrid and Jake start to make out. Astrid removes her short and bra and Jake starts touching her breasts. Dean watches it all.

Dean walks away and then he hears Jake leaving. Dean returns to watch Astrid climb through some ceiling tiles in one of the food aisles where she has a sleeping bag and some books.

The next morning, Dean tries to avoid eye contact with Jake. Niko announces they are changing their routine. The big kids will be working on projects and the little kids will be attending school. Brayden and Josie are obviously boyfriend and girlfriend now. After Dean goes to sleep that night, Jake wakes him up saying there is a woman outside that wants them to let her inside the store.

The older boys look at the woman begging to come inside on the video intercom. Then, they hear the monster man from before tell her that it is his store and they can hear him beating and killing the woman. Niko loses control because he thinks he could have saved the woman.

## Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

It seems as if Jake and Astrid have been romantically involved now for a while. When Jake cannot seem to get an erection, Astrid says that it is probably the stress and that it does not happen all the time. This indicates that Astrid and Jake have had sex before. Jake seems to want Astrid to return to the group, but she seems frightened at the fact that she might not be able to control herself and that she might hurt someone again like she hurt Batiste before.



# Chapters 17 and 18

## Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

Brayden, Niko, Dean, and Jake are drinking rum and getting drunk. Dean confronts Jake about using Astrid for sex and not truly loving her. Jake gets angry and beats Dean up. Josie comes and helps Dean up.

The next morning, Dean wakes up with a hangover and sore from his beating. He goes to Jake's room. Dean lies to Jake, telling him that Astrid told him about the relationship she has with Jake. Jake accepts his apology.

Jake also gives Dean drugs for the pain and steroids. Jake cleans up Dean's face and resents his broken nose. Josie finds the two boys and comments on how she is glad to see they are both up and moving around. She also tells them that they have lice, which is why some of the younger kids have been scratching their heads.

## Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

The older boys are starting to bond. They know that they need to work together in order to survive. They also know that they are the leaders that have to set the right example for the younger kids. Just as they realize this, however, there is a breakdown, which causes Jake to lash out at Dean and break Dean's nose.

The drugs that Jake gives Dean explain some of Jake's bizarre behavior. It also explains why Jake seemed high to Dean when Jake was giving his election speech. Additionally, it explains why Jake could not get an erection when he and Astrid were trying to have sex because steroids cause impotence.



# Chapters 19 and 20

## Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

The kids gather in their swimsuits for a hair washing party. Sahalia notices as Brayden kisses Josie. Sahalia is dressed in very short shorts. She straddles one of the plastic buckets to wash her own hair. When she bends over, all of the older boys can see up Sahalia's shorts. When she turns around, her shirt is wet and see through. Josie rushes to cover the thirteen year old with a towel.

At breakfast the next day, Dean feels worse and both of his eyes are black. Alex asks him what really happened and Dean admits that Jake hit him. When Alex tries to get a straight answer from Dean, Dean gets angry and tells Alex to go hang out with Niko as he has been doing.

Jake comes along and convinces Dean to get high with him. They take some more pain pills. Jake admits that he cannot get an erection because it is a side effect of the contamination for his blood type. Jake and Dean walk by the aisle where they find Sahalia scantily dressed laying air hockey with Brayden.

Josie asks what is going on when she finds Sahalia with her arms draped around Brayden's neck. Josie confronts Sahalia about throwing herself at the boys and reminds Sahalia that she is only thirteen. When Josie stomps off angry because Brayden is flirting with Sahalia and because Josie notices Dean and Jake are high, Brayden takes some of the drugs Jake offers to him.

Dean sleeps through lunch and dinner. In the middle of the night, he wakes up to Astrid in his birth. She yells at him for spying on her and for taking the pain pills. She tells Dean his behavior is unacceptable and that he has to remain one of the good people.

## Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

Sahalia likes Brayden. She is trying to get his attention by bending over in short shorts and wetting her top so that he can see her boobs through her shirt. Sahalia seeking Brayden's attention seems to be working. Dean mentions that while Josie is washing Brayden's hair that the look on Brayden's face seems to be him thinking about how to get into Sahalia's shorts.

Dean is jealous because Alex has been spending a lot of time with Niko. Dean feels as if he and Alex should be close and confiding in another because they are brothers. When he witnesses Alex behaving with Niko like Alex should be behaving with him, this hurts Dean. Since Dean is hurt, he lashes out at Alex.



# Chapters 21 and 22

## Chapters 21 and 22 Summary

It is the tenth day that the kids have been trapped inside of the store. Dean wakes Max to be his helper again instead of waking Chloe, who is supposed to be his helper for the day. After making breakfast, Max and Dean go to look for the others. They find them in the storage room looking out at a group of people that say they know Mrs. Wooly. They also say they shot the man that was protecting the store—the deranged man. The kids take a vote about allowing the people inside of the store, which they will do through the hatch in the roof.

They agree to let the men inside in exchange for information on what is happening outside in the town. The men clean themselves off with baby wipes and gallons of water. They also have a dog with them. The children greet Mr. Appleton and Robbie, and the dog, Luna, with gifts. Mr. Appleton's leg is bleeding and so he requests they bring him some medical supplies. The children take care of Mr. Appleton's wounds and then they make a huge breakfast for all them to eat together.

## Chapters 21 and 22 Analysis

It does seem as if Mrs. Wooly sent Mr. Appleton to the store to check on the children. What does not seem to fit is why Mrs. Wooly did not return to the store with the two men. Even though the children confiscate the men's guns, the men are older and stronger than the children are and can overpower them if they need to.



## Chapters 23 and 24

### Chapters 23 and 24 Summary

Dean gets the younger children to give the dog a bath. This gives the older children a chance to hear Mr. Appleton tell them about what is going on outside. When the grownups compliment the children on how they have set things up in the store, Dean gets an uneasy feeling as if the grownups are going to take over.

Robbie assesses the damage to the bus. He enlists the little kids to help him fix it. Robbie is even able to get Sahalia to help, even though she has been acting as if she is an outcast for the past couple of days.

### Chapters 23 and 24 Analysis

The story that the grownups share with the children indicates that Mrs. Wooly is not with them because she may have died when some type-Os attacked the school. The uneasy feeling Dean has about the grownups suggest he is having a premonition of what is to come—that is that the adults won't uphold their part of the agreement, which is to leave the store the following day, after the kids load them up with supplies.





# Chapters 25 and 26

## Chapters 25 and 26 Summary

When the little kids find out at dinner that the grownups have to leave the following day, they get very upset. Sahalia and Brayden even threaten to leave with the grownups if Niko makes the grownups go. Josie and Dean talk it over with Niko. Niko says something just does not feel right about the men. Despite his apprehension, he agrees to allow them to stay for two more days.

The next day, Mr. Appleton is looking for Niko to discuss his and Robbie's departure plan. When the group gathers for lunch, Mr. Appleton tells everyone that the government is evacuating residents that make it to the Denver airport. The kids start chanting that they need to drive the bus to Denver. Mr. Appleton encourages them to each write a letter to their parents so he and Robbie can deliver it to them and the parents can come back for the children.

Alex shows Dean a transmitter he built for Robbie and Mr. Appleton to take with them so they can keep in contact about what is happening in the world outside of the store. Dean sits down to write his letter to their parents. They prepare the food and supplies Robbie and Mr. Appleton need for their departure.

Robbie pulls Dean aside to tell him that he does not think Mr. Appleton is well enough to make the trip. Dean tries to talk Mr. Appleton into staying until he feels better, but Mr. Appleton insists they are leaving after having dinner with the kids.

## Chapters 25 and 26 Analysis

Mr. Appleton and Robbie represent opposites. Robbie is the loving and sensitive one of the two men. All of the kids take to Robbie and truly want him to stay living with them inside of the store. Robbie seems to take a liking to all of the children as well, which makes him upset when it is time for him and Mr. Appleton to leave.

Mr. Appleton, on the other hand, is rigid and sensitive to the children's noise. He is anxious to leave the store, while Robbie is keen on staying. In a way, it seems as if Robbie and Mr. Appleton are playing a game of good cop, bad cop with the children.

# Chapters 27 and 28

## Chapters 27 and 28 Summary

Everyone except for Jake and Astride participate in the farewell dinner. As Mr. Appleton is shaking Niko's hand to leave, Mr. Appleton slumps to the floor. They discuss trying to get Mr. Appleton to the hospital, but Robbie mentions it was one of the first places to be closed down because it was mobbed. They use smelling salts to wake Mr. Appleton up. They each take shifts on caring for Mr. Appleton.

In the middle of the night, Astrid wakes them all up screaming. They find her pointing a gun at Robbie with a half-naked Sahalia nearby clutching to Astrid's legs. Astrid insinuates that Robbie was trying to have sex with Sahalia. Robbie keeps insisting that Sahalia threw herself at him.

Brayden takes the gun from Astrid. Robbie starts to struggle with Brayden over the gun. The gun fires and Brayden slumps to the floor. Robbie is holding the gun and pointing it at Niko when Josie shoots Robbie with the other gun.

## Chapters 27 and 28 Analysis

When Robbie says the hospital was the first place to close down, it suggests that Mrs. Wooly never made it to the hospital. The other option is that Mrs. Wooly could have been mobbed at the hospital. If this were the case then Mrs. Wooly would not have been able to send the two men to the children, which means that the men have a different motive for being there.



# Chapters 29 and 30

## Chapters 29 and 30 Summary

They send the little kids to their rooms. They drag Robbie's body away and they stabilize Brayden, who was shot in the shoulder. Once they make Brayden comfortable, they go to talk to Sahalia. She says Robbie was going to take her with him, but then he started touching her. Josie seeks confirmation that she did the right thing by killing Robbie and they all tell her she did the right thing.

As they settle in to sleep, Astrid tells Dean that she thinks she has lice. He offers to wash her hair. She hands him a pair of scissors saying he has to cut it first. Dean cuts it and then washes it. Dean gives Astrid a ski cap to keep her almost bald head warm.

Later, Dean and Niko start packing supplies into the bus. They are preparing to make the trip to Denver International Airport. Josie comes running in crying. She says Mr. Appleton is dead. Niko embraces Josie and then they start kissing. Astrid and Dean walk away.

## Chapters 29 and 30 Analysis

While the group of kids has been cocooned in the safety and security of the Greenway, the outside world has now adversely affected their little bubble. Once Robbie and Mr. Appleton penetrated the Greenway, evil entered. In a way, the Greenway represents Heaven or the good side, while the outside world represents hell or the evil side.

By preparing to make the trip to Denver, the kids are leaving behind their Utopia and heading straight into hell. With many unknowns in front of them, almost anything can happen on their journey.



# Chapters 31, 32 and 33

## Chapters 31, 32 and 33 Summary

When they arrive at the aisle where Mr. Appleton and Brayden are, they see a waxen Mr. Appleton and an ashen and clammy Brayden. Dean gets the idea to use Alex's video walkie-talkies to go to the highway and the hospital wearing one of the walkie-talkies so the others can see if it is safe to come outside.

Jake insists that he go instead. With his blood type, he will not have the adverse reactions to the chemicals that Dean is likely to have. Additionally, Jake wants to make up for using drugs instead of helping the group out more.

When the little kids wake up, they lie to them about Robbie leaving and that Brayden being shot being an accident. They dress Jake and prepare him to leave with the video walkie-talkie. Alex hooks the other walkie-talkie to one of the bigtabs straight from the box, so they can watch Jake's movements. Alex helps Jake go out through the hatch.

Jake says it is darker outside than he expected. He sees that there are lights on the highway. When Jake makes it to the hospital, the building is closed and dark. It is also covered with flyers, cards, and notes. Jake finds the Griebler family Christmas card, which has a note to Alex and Dean from their parents. They say they are going to Denver and implore the boys to stay safe or to make their way to Denver.

Jake takes off the camera and walks away. Astrid breaks down crying. Dean hears the bus start up across the store. Dean realizes Niko has started the bus.

Everyone fills the bus up with supplies. Astrid pulls Dean aside. She tells him she is going to stay and asks him to stay with her. She also tells Dean that she is four months pregnant. They tell the others that they are going to stay. There is resistance to them, staying behind but eventually the bus pulls out of the gate that Alex has figured out how to open. The twins end up getting off the bus to stay with Astrid and Dean. The novel ends by saying now there are five of them.

## Chapters 31, 32 and 33 Analysis

Jake's journey confirms some of the information Mr. Appleton and Robbie provided to the children. His experience also provides additional information to the group. While Alex and Dean receive good news about their parents that generates hope for them, it seems as if Jake has received bad news about his own family. This is what likely caused him to say that he could not take it anymore and caused him to remove the camera and walk away.

Astrid, her baby, the twins, and Dean will start a new society on their own. The book's ending also suggests that there might even be a sequel to the novel in order to explain

what happens to the bus full of children, the United States in general, and the children left behind living inside the Greenway store.



# Characters

## Dean Grieber

Dean Grieber is a high school student and the main character of the novel. Dean lives with his parents and younger brother, Alex. Dean used to drive him and his brother to school but now the gas shortage have forced Dean and Alex to ride the bus. Dean has a crush on Astrid Heyman, a girl that he goes to school with.

Dean has always been short, but the summer prior to this school year, he grew in height and so he is much taller now. In a way, Dean is an introvert. He is a little bit shy and likes to keep to himself. Dean and his brother Alex have a very close relationship. They tend to do things together after school. Additionally, when Dean was driving, he drove his brother to school prior to driving himself to the high school.

Dean however learns how to be more of an extrovert once the bus accident occurs and the children start living inside of the Greenway store. He takes on one of the leadership roles in the group. In Dean's case, Dean becomes the cook, making him responsible for feeding and nourishing all of the children and his peers.

## Alex Grieber

Alex is Dean's younger brother. Alex is in junior high school. One of his favorite pastimes is to go to the second-hand store with Dean to buy old electronics.

Similar to their father, Alex is very intelligent. He has an aptitude for engineering things. This leads Alex to build a visual walkie-talkie so that when the adults leave the store, the children left behind can see and hear what is happening outside in the world.

Alex also forms a bond with Niko while they are living in the store. This bond makes Dean jealous, but no matter what, Alex and Dean are brother so they try to support each other as much as they can. Alex is very upset when Dean tells him that he is going to stay behind because Alex feels as if Dean is choosing Astrid over Dean's own family.

## Mrs. Wooly

Mrs. Wooly is the bus driver that takes the elementary and middle school children from Dean and Alex's neighborhood to school. She is a grizzled woman with wiry grey hair. She smells like an ashtray and she talks tough. Mrs. Wooly is also a devoted bus driver. She is the one that ends up saving the lives of the living children from the bus crash during the hailstorm and depositing them inside of Greenway.



## Mr. Reed

Mr. Reed is the bus driver for the high school bus. Mr. Reed is driving Dean's bus when the hailstorm strikes and causes the bus accident. Mr. Reed drinks his coffee out of an old jelly jar. Mr. Reed dies in the bus crash.

## Jake Simonsen

Jake Simonsen is a high school football star. He moved to Dean's school about one year ago from Texas. Jake and Astrid are having a secret relationship while they are living inside the Greenway. It seems as if their relationship might have started prior to the hailstorm. Jake is the father of Astrid's baby but it is unclear if he knows that Astrid is pregnant.

Jake ends up using drugs that he takes the store pharmacy. He uses drugs and alcohol throughout the novel to dull the pain and trauma that he feels. Jake also volunteers to go outside so they can determine if the hospital is open and if it is safe for them to drive the bus to Denver. When Jake reaches the hospital, he tells the others that he can't take it anymore and that he's not returning to the store.

## Astrid Heyman

Astrid Heyman is a girl that Dean attends high school with. She is also on Dean's bus. She is on the swim team at school and is a champion diver. Additionally, Astrid is the girl of Dean's dreams. Astrid worked at the Pizza Shack, which is the snack bar inside of Greenway, so she offers to make pizzas for lunch when the children take refuge inside the store.

Astrid segregates herself from the others when she has a bad reaction from the nuclear chemicals that causes her to choke Ulysses almost to death. Later, Astrid returns to the group. Astrid decides to remain behind in the store when the other drive to Denver because she is pregnant and wants to protect her unborn child.

## Niko Mills

Niko Mills is another high school student on Dean's bus. The rumor is that Niko lives in a cabin in the woods with his grandfather. The cabin doesn't have electricity and he and his grandfather hunt for all their own food. Niko pulls the screaming Josie out of the bus to safety after the crash. Niko ends up being elected as the leader of the group until Mrs. Wooly returns. He is also the one that drives the bus full of children to Denver in order to evacuate to Alaska.



## Josie Miller

Josie Miller is a hippie activist that goes to school with Dean. She is sitting on the school bus with Trish Greenstein. When the bus crashes, Josie sustains a serious head injury and Mrs. Wooly thinks Josie is in shock. Josie's friend Trish dies during the crash.

Josie emerges as a leader for the younger children when Astrid goes into hiding. Josie is the one responsible for turning the dressing rooms in the store into the living quarters for the group.

## Brayden

Brayden is another high school student on the bus. He's always bragging that his father works at NORAD. After the crash, Brayden takes out his minitab to record Josie screaming and freaking out after the crash. Brayden is shot in the shoulder when he struggles over the gun with Robbie. Brayden is near death when Niko decides to evacuate them all on the bus. Part of Niko's decision to evacuate them is that Brayden needs medical attention to save Brayden's life.

## Max

Max is a first grader that is in Greenway with the others. He has blonde hair and a cowlick that makes his hair stand out straight on the back of his head. Max's father is a truck driver and Max talks about drinking slushies all over America while Dean serves the slushies. Max is always telling outrageous stories about his parents.

## Ulysses

Ulysses is another one of the younger children. Ulysses is Hispanic and doesn't seem to speak much English. He is also missing both of his front teeth. Ulysses is also in first grade and is in Max's class at school. Ulysses gets excited when Robbie arrives at the store because Robbie speaks Spanish, so Ulysses can more effectively communicate with Robbie and the other members of the group.

## Chloe

Chloe is a third grader. She is the one that starts to cry and whine when Mrs. Wooly says she's leaving the children behind to go get help. Chloe also gives Dean a hard time about the design he makes when mixing the two slushie flavors together. Chloe is chubby, has a tan and a lot of energy.





## McKinley Twins

The McKinley twins are Alex and Dean's neighbors. They are small and skinny. They have red hair and freckles. They are paternal twins, so one is a boy and one is a girl. They are five years old, in kindergarten and the youngest of the children trapped inside of Greenway. The twins end up staying behind with Astrid and Dean when they others evacuate to Denver.

## Batiste

Batiste is an Asian child with dark black hair. Batiste comes from a religious family. He is always citing how each of them is sinning.

## Sahalia

Sahalia is a girl that is about Alex's age. She is very fashion conscious so she is dressed in the latest fashions and is wearing makeup. Sahalia is the first of the younger children to suggest they get out of the store to go home. She even escapes to the roof of the store but doesn't go any further when she's the devastation outside.

Sahalia seems to connect more to the group when Robbie arrives. Robbie tries to rape Sahalia, which is why Astrid ends up pulling a gun on Robbie.



# Objects/Places

## Greenway

Greenway is the store that Mrs. Wooly crashes the bus into so she can unload the children inside safely away from the hailstorm. Greenway is a department store in Monument where the children and bus driver take refuge and find supplies after the bus crash.

## Monument, Colorado

Monument, Colorado is the town that offers the primary setting of the novel. From Dean's description of Monument, it appears to be a suburban town where many families live. Overall, Monument sounds as if it is a safe and enjoyable environment to live and raise a family until the hailstorm strikes.

## Pizza Shack

Pizza Shack is the snack bar inside of the Greenway store. Astrid worked at the Pizza Shack the previous summer so she knows how to work the pizza ovens to feed the children. The Pizza Shack is also where the children take shelter under the tables during the earthquake.

## The Dump

The Dump is the baby aisle of the Greenway store. The group turns this aisle into the toilet area after they realize the water in the bathrooms is contaminated with the nuclear chemicals. The Dump is also where they take all of the trash and other waste items they accumulate while living in the store.

## Bus

The bus Mrs. Wooly drove through the store is sitting at the entrance of the store. When Robbie arrives, he works on fixing the bus so the children can drive it in an emergency. Niko ends up starting the bus and driving it to Denver in an attempt to evacuate the children and get Brayden the medical attention that he needs.



## Roof Hatch

The roof hatch on the store is how the children can exit the store. The roof hatch is how they allow Mr. Appleton and Robbie to enter the store. The roof hatch is also how Jake exits the store for the last time.

## Guns

Mr. Appleton and Robbie arrive inside of the store with guns. The children confiscate the guns and hide them. When Astrid finds Robbie attempting to rape Sahalia, she points one of the guns at Robbie. When Robbie and Brayden struggle over the gun, the gun goes off and accidentally shoots Brayden in the shoulder. Josie ends up picking up the other gun to shoot and kill Robbie.

## Denver

Denver, Colorado is the closest major city to Monument, Colorado. Denver is also where the international airport is. The children end up driving the bus to Denver so they can be evacuated to Alaska.

## Alaska

Alaska is the state where they are sending evacuees. After arriving in Denver, the children are hoping to go to Alaska. This is where they hope to reunite with their families.

## Bigtab

A bigtab is the large version of the minitab. A bigtab is similar to a large iPad, where the residents of Monument can watch television, connect to the Internet, connect to the Network, communicate and more. Alex connects the walkie-talkies to a bigtab that he takes out of the box so they can all watch Jake's progress as he makes his way to the hospital.



# Themes

## Coming of Age

One of the primary themes that run throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age. Dean and the other teenagers struggle with the fact that their coming of age experience propels them into adulthood because they are facing the adversity of the downfall of their society. While Dean and his peers are teenagers, they have to start acting as if they are adults, and they have to start making adult decisions in order to take care of themselves and the younger children while they are trapped inside of the store.

Dean also faces having to do the right thing in life. He recognizes that the situation the children are in is a genuine life or death situation. This is why Dean works so hard and effortlessly to do his part to care for everyone in the store and to protect them at all costs. Dean also takes on the adult responsibility of caring for the children by cooking for and feeding everyone in the role of the group's cook or chef.

## Truths and Secrets

Another plot throughout the entire novel is that of the truth versus secrets. The children inside of the store continuously struggle with the fact that they do not really know what is happening in their town and the world outside the confines of the store. The children no longer have the opportunity to enjoy a normal childhood because the world in which they live is forever altered. Additionally, the older children continuously have to keep secrets and the truth about their situation from the younger children.

Astrid chooses to lie about being pregnant, keeping it a secret for some reason. She only tells her secret to Dean. This secret affects Astrid's decision to remain behind to live in the store instead of going to Denver to evacuate to Alaska. Astrid's secret is also the truth that affects Dean's decision to stay behind with Astrid.

Jake also has his own secrets while living in the store. He is secretly stealing drugs from the pharmacy. Drug usage is how Jake opts to deal with the fright and pain of the situation they are in. When Jake faces the truth about how his drug use is adversely affecting his own life and the lives of the others, he tries to make amends by venturing outside to assess the situation. The truth of the gravity of what has become of their town and their lives drives Jake to not return to the safety and security of the store, but instead to run out into the contaminated world unprotected, where he is likely to die.

## Family

Family is another central theme throughout the entire novel. This is because the storyline is about the lives of the surrogate family the children form when they take



refuge inside of the Greenway store. While every family has their trials and tribulations, the Greenway family has its own family dynamics that are the same and that are different from those of other families. In the end though, they are a family and they will get through it together, one way or the other.

In this case, the children struggle with wanting to have their normal childhood back, but also face the fact that they are unlikely to ever have their lives back the way they once were. The need and desire to reunite with their families and their old lives. Dean's desire to create a new family with Astrid is what propels him to stay behind. Even the McKinley twins opt to create a new family with Astrid and Dean rather than go out into the unknown.

# Style

## Point of View

The novel is written in the first-person point of view. The narrator of the novel is Dean Grieber. The narrator is telling the story as he writes it in his journal as the events in the novel unfold, but he also provides flashbacks of the past to help fill in the details of the plot.

The point of view of this novel is an intimate point of view that allows a reader to connect closely with the main character, Dean Grieber. The point of view also allows the author to inject her own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place with each of the characters in the novel without having to move out of character or interrupt the flow of the narration. Hence, the point of view works well with this novel and the author's writing style.

## Setting

The primary setting of the novel is in the Green way store that is in Monument, Colorado. The novel is set in the year 2024. The setting of this novel is important because it is about what happens to the townspeople of Monument when a megatsunami causes a major hailstorm and nuclear chemical fallout from the local plant.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware of what causes the major hailstorm and how long the children have to live and survive inside of the Greenway store. However, as events unfold, the environmental situation is a constant part of the lives of the characters and the outcome of the novel.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is modern. Since it is set in the future, some of the words are created by the author. The language of the novel is not formal, however, and is easy to understand. The language is educated, strong and descriptive enough that it creates a flow that leaves the reader impressed with the words as much as the plot when the novel ends.

The language of the novel is appropriate to the plot because it is accurate to the characters in the novel and the education level of the writer. The novel is not in love with its own words, but it is descriptive enough that the reader finds enjoyment in the words as well as the plot. The language is not difficult to understand, however, and everything is clear in its context. For this reason the language of the novel fits well with the plot of the novel.

## Structure

The novel consists of 33 chapters, which covers the 14 days the group spends inside of the Greenway store. Each chapter is anywhere from five to fifteen pages long. The chapters tell the story both in exposition and dialogue. The main character of the book is the narrator, so he is telling the story from his point of view. This allows the narrator to provide his own opinions of the events surrounding the setting of the novel, as well as the actions taking place within the plot.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows the coming of age story of the main characters. The subplots involve truths and secrets and the trials and tribulations of the family.



## Quotes

"The hail will kill us" (Chapter 1, p. 7).

"I'm gonna to tell the school about what you did back there. Real heroic, son" (Chapter 2, p. 15).

"And everyone else is locked out" (Chapter 3, p. 32).

"There are reports that several chemical warfare agents may be leaking from NORAD's storage facilities" (Chapter 4, p. 45).

"What's wrong with Dean" (Chapter 5, p. 56).

"OPEN THE GATE OR I WILL KILL YOU. I WILL TEAR YOUR LITTLE KIDDO HEADS OFF AND I WILL MAKE SOUP OUT YOUR LITTLE SMART-ASS KIDDO BRAINS AND" (Chapter 6, p. 68).

"Nobody's thinking about getting out of here" (Chapter 7, p. 75).

"Josie" (Chapter 8, p. 89).

"This fight is over" (Chapter 9, p. 104).

"We will all be so happy, when Mrs. Wooly comes to take us" (Chapter 10, p. 107).

"Where's Astrid? Isn't she coming" (Chapter 11, p. 115).

"I know how to survive and I'll teach you how to survive" (Chap. 12, p. 127).

"I'm leaving them out for Astrid" (Chapter 13, p. 134).

"Jake, I was hoping you would take on an assignment - Head of Security" (Chapter 14, p. 140).





"It's just stress. It's not like this has happened before" (Chapter 15, p. 150).

"It's not your fault" (Chapter 16, p. 158).

"He's a sneak. He's a pervert" (Chapter 17, p. 164).

"Astrid told me that stuff in confidence" (Chapter 18, p. 166).

"I can see your boobies, Sahalia" (Chapter 19, p. 173).

"I need you to stay one of the good guys" (Chapter 20, p. 183).

"We'll let you in. on the following conditions" (Chapter 21, p. 191).

"Well, now we said thanks, so I'm gonna eat more" (Chapter 22, p. 200).

"We've been looking at the inventory. I think we can stay here for up to twenty to twenty-four months, given the supplies we have" (Chapter 23, p. 207).

"Niko, we should totally do it, in case of emergency" (Chapter 24, p. 212).

"I don't know what I think! Except that everyone is putting pressure on me to do something that feels wrong" (Chapter 25, p. 225).

"Well, we need to have another meeting, so I can tell you about Denver" (Chapter 26, p. 229).

"The hospital's closed. It was one of the first things to go" (Chapter 27, p. 239).

"She's crazy, that girl" (Chapter 28, p. 242).

"I don't want Brayden to die" (Chapter 29, p. 249).

"Mr. Appleton's dead" (Chapter 30, p. 260).

"You're going to die, just to try to save him" (Chapter 31, p. 265).

"I'm not...I'm not coming back. I can't take it anymore" (Chapter 32, p. 278).

"I'm gonna have a baby" (Chapter 33, p. 284).

## Topics for Discussion

Who is Dean Griebler? Why does he feel like an outsider in his own life? What does Dean recall about his childhood? What is Dean's biggest demon that haunts him during his time in the store? Why is this important? How does it change his life?

Discuss the relationship between Dean and Alex Griebler. Are they like father and son, just brothers, or is it something else? Is there love, guilt or a sense of obligation in their relationship? Why do you think Dean gets so upset when Alex and Niko get close? How does Dean feel about Alex? How does Alex feel about Dean? Why does Alex choose to leave the store while Dean chooses to stay? What does Alex do about it?

Discuss the relationship between Dean and Astrid. Why do you think Dean keeps his feelings for Astrid a secret? Is there love, guilt or a sense of obligation in their relationship? How does Dean feel about Astrid? How does Astrid feel about Astrid? Why does Dean help Astrid throughout the novel? What do you think happens to Dean and Astrid after the novel ends?

Who is Jake? What do you think causes him to have a secret relationship with Astrid? Why does he turn to drugs and segregate himself from the group? Why do think he volunteers to walk to the hospital? What do you think happens to return to the store?

Who is Niko? Why do you think the group elects him as the leader? Do you think he makes the right decision to drive the bus full of kids to Denver?

Who is Astrid? Why do you think she keeps her relationship with Jake a secret? Do you think she knows how Dean feels about her? Do you think Astrid told Jake she was pregnant? What do you think happens to Astrid and her baby after the novel ends?

Discuss the society the characters seem to create in the store. What impact does it have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them or hold them back? Why is it an issue to the characters? Does it have anything to do with way that relationships develop and evolve? What impact does it have on the overall outcome in the novel?